UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID
FACULTAD DE GEOGRAFÍA E HISTORIA
DEPARTAMENTO DE HISTORIA DEL ARTE

TESIS DOCTORAL

Modern Art of Nepal (1850-1990). Picturing a Nation, Performing an Identity

Arte contemporáneo de Nepal (1850-1990). Esbozando una nación, evocando una identidad

MEMORIA PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE DOCTORA

PRESENTADA POR

Andrea de la Rubia Gómez-Morán

DIRECTORA

Eva Fernández del Campo Barbadillo

Madrid
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BAJO LA DIRECCIÓN DE LA DRA:

Eva Fernández del Campo Barbadillo

Madrid, Octubre 2018

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Para Ana

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Part Two

Part Three

Abstract

The research work *Modern Art of Nepal (1850-1990). Picturing a Nation, Performing an Identity* consists in an historical reconstruction, and critical analysis, about the process of development of the avant-garde aesthetics in Nepalese art, promoted over the last centuries as a visual means of communication for the cultural definition of the Himalayan Kingdom and its national identity.

As a first step to understand the social and cultural dimensions implicit in the case of study, the main corpus of this work has been contextualised around the concepts of imagination, nostalgia and irony, implying a reviewing perspective with regard the following points:

a) First of all, the analysis of the nation of Nepal as a utopian idea and reflection of the Oriental myth generated by the East/West dichotomy. Understood, on the one hand, as the cultural frame that defines its identity towards the global world and, on the other, as a strategy to unify its diverse areas, ethnicities and cultures within its political frontiers.

b) Secondly, the invention of the Nepalese traditional history and culture by Western sciences which focuses on the arts and architecture developed within Kathmandu Valley, choosing this as the country´s cultural iconographies and "made in Nepal" international brand while omitting the multicultural reality of the Kingdom of the Himalaya.

c) Also, the concepts of "Orientalism"/"Occidentalism" as a process of round trip exoticism, during which while the foreigners mythicise Nepal, the Nepalese mythicise the foreigners. And consequently, the adoption of Western goods in a never-ending process of reformulation of the foreignness, and hybridisation with the local lifestyles.

d) And lastly, the local appropriation of the Oriental idea of "Nepal", as a fundamental aspect in the self-construction of the national identity and projection of the country towards the outside world, while using modern visual arts as an international means of communication for such an aim.

Regarding it´s structural methodology, this work is set up while following the guide of a mandala. The convenience of using this schema is justified as the basis from where the aesthetical aspects of Kathmandu develop, and where the (apparently opposite) aspects of "traditional" and "modern" become complementary to each other, thus understood in a round, and not a linear, way.

On the other hand, as part of the working methodology, the mandala is also utilised according to its ritualistic aspects, where the idea of the performance becomes a fundamental complement of this schema. This idea is another aspect to be applied in the analysis of the development of modern art in Nepal, when understanding this as a theatrical act with the Himalaya and the Kathmandu Valley as a background curtain. In this way, the present work states how modern art is not only a tool for the representation of the nation and its cultural frame, but also a tool for the performance of the modern artist as a creator, usually belonging to the high castes of Nepal, and in contrast to the figure of the traditional artisan referring to the commercial artists coming from the lower strata of society.

Due to the need to establish a logical frame that organises the aesthetics of Nepalese art within a temporal chronology, this work is done with the main aim of presenting an historical overview that ranges since the onset of the Rana period (1850) up to the end of the Panchayat regime (1990). Thus, in order to give a critical answer to the question of "what is modern art of Nepal", this work analyses how the diverse avant-garde aesthetics were nationalised as effective tools for the collective worship to the country of Nepal, as well as the international promotion of the country for its economic development, being the historical development of modern art organised around the concepts of imagination, nostalgia and irony, as follows:

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Modern Art of Nepal (1850-1990)</th><th colspan="2">Picturing a Nation</th><th>Performing an Identity</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">  </td><td rowspan="2">imagination (1850-1950)</td><td rowspan="2">picturesque Himalaya & Kathmandu</td><td>picturesque Rana portraits</td><td rowspan="2">the rulers as divinities</td></tr>
<tr><td>picturesque paubhā</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">  </td><td rowspan="2">nostalgia (1950-1980)</td><td>tourist souvenir</td><td>commercial art</td><td>the traditional artist as the artisan</td></tr>
<tr><td>modern “Nepaliness”</td><td>abstract Himalaya “magic surrealism” “neo-traditional” art</td><td>the modern artist as the creator</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">  </td><td rowspan="2">irony (1980-1990)</td><td rowspan="2">political art</td><td>cartoon</td><td rowspan="2">the artist as the artwork</td></tr>
<tr><td>installation & performance arts</td></tr>
</table>

To conclude with, this research establishes that modern art of Nepal is to be understood mainly as a visual tool that contributes to describe the idea of the country as Shangri-La. This fact occurs in order to promote the nation-state in a global level, emphasising its traditional culture through a round trip process of adaptation of the international aesthetics and its progressive nationalisation with the local trends, but also it is a means to gather the multicultural societies of Nepal around a single culture and country, represented by a series of the national icons of the mountain, the King, and the cultural heritage of Kathmandu.

In order to analyse this, it must be taken into account that the idea of the Nepalese traditional culture was initially established by the first foreign researchers in the Himalayan mountain range, whose works were mainly focused on the Kathmandu Valley or the picturesque mountain scenery. As a result of the increase “tribalisation” mainly caused by global and economic interests, such “Orientalising” idea was appropriated by the Nepalese themselves as a way to define their national identity. Consequently, the

concept of “Nepaliness” was raised as a local strategy with the aim of making a modern art “authentic Nepalese”, and through which the temporary parameters of “traditional” and “modern” are here understood in a complementary way.

In a similar way, the present work underlines the performative idea as a relevant part of the modern work of art, where the ritualistic practice of becoming modern artist is to be analysed as part of the artwork itself. At the same time, the performance is to be applied in the process of creation as something that was always supervised by the Panchayat system, and influenced by the King´s presence in every one of the *National Art Exhibitions,* and other cultural events taking place in Kathmandu´s theatrical scene.

However, in spite of the government´s control and subtle censorship with regard the development of art in this country, the last conclusion establishes the hypothesis that many of these avant-garde paintings reflect a certain ironical sense behind its suitable “Nepaliness”, being such double-face the true voice of the Nepalese people during the ambivalent “democratic” times of the Panchayat regime, until the people´s revolution and its consequent fall in 1990.

Resumen

El trabajo de investigación *Arte contemporáneo de Nepal (1850-1990). Esbozando una nación, evocando una identidad*, consiste en una reconstrucción histórica, y un análisis crítico, sobre el proceso de desarrollo de la estética vanguardista en el arte nepalí, desarrollado a lo largo de los últimos siglos como un nuevo medio de comunicación visual, para definir la cultura del Reino del Himalaya y su identidad nacional.

Como primer paso para comprender las dimensiones sociales y culturales implícitas en este trabajo, el cuerpo principal ha sido contextualizado en torno a los conceptos de imaginación, nostalgia e ironía, partiendo de una perspectiva crítica con respecto a los siguientes aspectos:

a) En primer lugar, el análisis de la nación de Nepal como una idea utópica y un reflejo del mito Oriental generado por la dicotomía Este/Oeste. Entendido, por un lado, como el marco cultural que define su identidad hacia el mundo global y, por otro, como una estrategia para unificar sus diversas áreas, etnias y culturas dentro de sus fronteras políticas.
b) En segundo lugar, la invención de la historia y cultura tradicional nepalí por parte de las ciencias occidentales, destacando el arte y la arquitectura desarrollada dentro del Valle de Katmandú. El cual ha sido elegido como icono cultural del país y marca internacional "*made in Nepal*", obviando la realidad multicultural del Reino del Himalaya.
c) También, los conceptos de "Orientalismo"/"Occidentalismo" como un proceso de exotismo de ida y vuelta, durante el cual mientras los extranjeros mitifican Nepal, los nepalíes mitifican a los extranjeros. Y por consiguiente la adopción de bienes occidentales en un interminable proceso de reformulación de lo extranjero e hibridación con los estilos de vida locales.
d) Y, por último, la apropiación local de la idea Oriental de Nepal, como un aspecto fundamental en la autoconstrucción de la identidad nacional y la proyección del país hacia el mundo exterior, al tiempo que se utilizan las artes visuales contemporáneas como un medio de comunicación para tal fin.

En cuanto a su metodología estructural este trabajo se establece siguiendo la estructura de un mandala. La conveniencia de este esquema se justifica como la base desde donde los aspectos estéticos de Katmandú son desarrollados, y donde los conceptos de lo "tradicional" y lo "contemporáneo", aparentemente opuestos, se complementan al ser entendidos de una manera circular, y no lineal.

Por otro lado, como parte de la metodología de trabajo, el mandala también se utiliza de acuerdo con su uso en el ritual, donde la idea de la *performance* se convierte en complemento fundamental de este esquema. Éste es un aspecto relevante a aplicar en el análisis del desarrollo del arte contemporáneo en Nepal, comprendido como un acto teatral con el Himalaya y el Valle de Katmandú como telón de fondo. Es a partir de dicha idea como el presente trabajo establece que la obra de arte contemporánea de Nepal no es solo una herramienta para la representación de la nación y su marco cultural, sino también una herramienta para el reconocimiento del artista contemporáneo como creador, generalmente perteneciente a las castas altas, y en contraposición a la figura del artesano tradicional, haciendo referencia a los artistas comerciales procedentes de los estratos inferiores de la sociedad.

Asimismo, debido a la necesidad de establecer un marco lógico que organice la estética del arte nepalí dentro de una cronología temporal, este trabajo se plantea con el objetivo principal de presentar un panorama histórico, que abarca desde el inicio del periodo Rana (1850) hasta el final del régimen de Panchayat (1990). A la vez que destaca los artistas y las obras de arte más representativas de cada movimiento y período de tiempo. Por tanto, a fin de dar una respuesta crítica a la pregunta "¿qué es el arte contemporáneo de Nepal?", este trabajo analiza cómo las diversas corrientes estéticas de vanguardia fueron nacionalizadas como herramientas efectivas para el culto colectivo al Reino de Nepal, establecido alrededor de los iconos de la montaña, el rey y el patrimonio cultural de Katmandú. Los cuales fueron elegidos como iconos para la promoción del país a nivel internacional, estando el desarrollo histórico de su arte contemporáneo organizado en torno a los conceptos de imaginación, nostalgia e ironía, de la siguiente manera:

Arte contemporáneo de Nepal (1850-1990)		**Esbozando una nación**		**Evocando una identidad**
	imaginación (1850-1950)	pintoresco Himalaya & Kathmandu	retratos pintorescos de los Rana	los gobernadores como divinidades
			paubhā pintoresca	
	nostalgia (1950-1980)	*souvenir* turístico	arte comercial	el artista tradicional como el artesano
		"nepalidad" moderna	Himalaya abstracto "surrealismo mágico" arte "neo-tradicional"	el artista contemporáneo como el creador
	ironía (1980-1990)	arte politico	*cartoon*	el artista como la obra de arte en sí mismo
			arte de la instalación & *performance*	

Finalmente, el presente trabajo establece que el arte contemporáneo de Nepal debe ser entendido principalmente como una herramienta visual para describir la idea del país como Shangri-La. Lo cual se lleva a cabo con el fin de promocionar el estado-nación mediante el énfasis en la construcción de su tradición cultural, y como resultado de un proceso de ida y vuelta que abarca la adopción de la estética internacional y su progresiva nacionalización con las tendencias locales. Pero también el arte contemporáneo se utiliza como un medio para reunificar las sociedades multiculturales de Nepal en torno a una sola cultura y país, a través de la representación de los iconos nacionales de la montaña, el rey y el patrimonio cultural de Katmandú.

Para analizar esta situación, debemos tener en cuenta que la idea de la cultura tradicional de Nepal fue inicialmente establecida por los primeros investigadores foráneos en la cordillera del Himalaya, cuyos trabajos se centraron principalmente en el Valle de Katmandú o en el pintoresco escenario de montaña. Y como los nepalíes se apropiaron de esta idea "orientalista" para de definir su identidad nacional, resultado de la creciente "tribalización" principalmente provocada por los intereses globales y económicos del

país. En consecuencia, la idea de "nepalidad" surge como estrategia local bajo el cometido de hacer de su obra contemporánea algo "auténtico de Nepal", y a través de la cual la temporalidad de lo "tradicional" y lo "moderno" han de ser comprendidos de forma complementaria.

Asimismo, este trabajo subraya la relevancia de la idea *performativa* de convertirse en artista contemporáneo, cuya práctica ritual debe de ser analizada como parte de la obra de arte en sí. Al mismo tiempo, la idea *performativa* se refleja en el proceso creativo siempre supervisado por el sistema Panchayat, e influenciado por la presencia del Rey en todas las *National Art Exhibitions* y otros eventos culturales llevados a cabo en el escenario teatral de Katmandú.

Pero a pesar de la estrecha supervisión del gobierno y de la sutil censura sobre el desarrollo del arte en este país, la última conclusión de este trabajo establece que muchas de estas pinturas de vanguardia reflejan un cierto sentido de ironía detrás de su adecuada "nepalidad", siendo esta doble cara la verdadera voz del pueblo nepalí contra la supuesta "democracia" Panchayat, hasta la revolución popular que provocó su caída en 1990.

Foreword: Around a mandala

It could be said that the new trends in Nepalese art were introduced back in the 19th century as a consequence of the Western creative styles in British India, and further developed throughout the Rana and post-Rana periods. But it would only be since the onset of the Panchayat system when a more nationalised modern style would start to be adopted as a hybrid visual practice, product of putting together the Western painting styles and the traditional Nepalese culture as a tool to promote the nation or "Nepaliness" in an international way.

Hence, while following the "made in Nepal" idea in order to emphasise the cultural aspects of the nation-state towards the global world, the development of modern art in the country basically involved the representation of its cultural heritage mixed with the new techniques and diverse avant-garde styles. According to this, the present work divides the question of modern art in Nepal into the following currents:

a) Initially, the picturesque art was developed by the British painters in the Himalaya mountain range, and adopted by the local elite as a tool for the representation of their social status as superior, or quasi-divine. For this, they used the picturesque outlook in landscape painting for the recreation of magical and oneiric backgrounds that emphasised their figure as the "rulers of Nepal", with a theatrical attitude[1].

b) From the 1950s, due to the advent of tourism in the Country of the Gods, the picturesque style experimented a gradual development towards a kitsch style of painting, through which Nepal would start to be represented as an enchanting mountain scenario according to the myth of Shangri-La[2]. At the same time that

[1] The picturesque would be firstly defined by William Gilpin as "something in between the beautiful and the sublime", emphasizing the beauty of the roughness of either a landscape "the bark of a tree, the craggy fields of mountains…", or even an architectural scenario. In William Gilpin, *Three Essays: on Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape* (London: R. Blamire, 1972).

[2] According to James Hilton´s novel *Lost Horizon*, Shangri-La was a magical city lost in the middle of the Himalayan mountain range. Even if he located this city in Tibet, its imaginary is also applied to the Kathmandu Valley. In James Hilton, *Lost Horizon* (United Kingdom: Macmillan, 1933).

the arrival of foreign influences provoked innovative approaches, due to the creative experiments with the avant-garde styles imported from Western lands[3].

c) And finally, during the times of the Panchayat system, the national idea of the "Nepaliness" in modern art appeared as a consequence of the picturesque outlook and kitsch styles, mixed up with the avant-garde trends. This idea developed with the aim of highlighting both the relevance of the country´s ancient culture for its international promotion, and also emphasising the feeling of a national identity among its community.

Clarifications

Since this research is presented with the aim of establishing an historical reconstruction of the diverse steps that created the basis of the current scenario of contemporary arts in Nepal, certain aspects should be clarified order to prevent possible misunderstandings.

1. On the one hand, given the extensive frame of time that the present work encompasses, it has to be said that it cannot cover all the artists involved in this movement. However a selection of the most significant ones are examined in a representative way. Similarly, it is not possible to cover every art exhibition or gallery that opened during this period of time, but rather concentrates on the main institutions and events, being this complemented by the information added in the annexes.

3 The kitsch idea is defined by Calinescu as an indisputable sign of modernization and aesthetical way of commercializing beauty, according to the middle-class taste at the upsurge of consumerism in the Nepalese community. In Matei Calinescu, *Cinco caras de la modernidad. Modernismo, vanguardia, decadencia, "kitsch", postmodernismo.* Trans. María Teresa Beguiristain (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 222-236.

2. Also, it has to be emphasised that this work was never been established with the aim of making an exhaustive comparison with the development of modern art in India. Even if in numerous occasions the case of India is mentioned due to its undeniable influence in modern art of Nepal, this work presents the Kingdom of the Himalaya as independent and, therefore, with an evolving path differing from its neighbouring country.

3. And, finally, although in many occasions an anthropological approach has been necessary for the analysis of the situation overall, it has to be considered that the main commitment of this work is historical. Leaving the anthropological hints as open questions to be properly developed by the professionals in the field in future stages.

Hypothesis

Accordingly, the present study departs from the following hypothesis:

The first hypothesis establishes that the Nepalese modern art has been developed mainly as a consequence of the introduction of the Western styles and modern techniques in the Himalayan country, and also due to the West´s exotic invention of Nepal and its "traditional culture" according to the romantic idea of Shangri-La. Consequently, Nepalese modern art was promoted as a visual tool for the purposes of:

a) Projecting the nation of Nepal and its cultural identity as a tourist attraction for its economic development through international income.
b) Or projecting the idea of Nepal as a modernised country through the appropriation of foreign styles as symbols of distinction exclusively designed for the Nepalese elite.

The second hypothesis is that the development of modern art has been set around the issue of the national identity and the establishment of the traditional culture of the country in modern times, underlining the communal sense of belonging to Nepal as an idea that has developed around the figure of the King within the Kathmandu Valley´s cultural area, while omitting the other ethnicities inhabiting the multicultural Himalaya. This is due to:

a) For many years, Western academic studies have been focused mainly on Kathmandu and the art developed by the *newār* ethnicity, or the caste of artists, choosing this as the country´s cultural icon towards the international world.
b) At the same time, as well as in ancient times the building of the Kathmandu Valley´s cultural heritage was led and commissioned by the rulers of the different dynasties, the relevance of the Prime Minister or King during Rana and Panchayat periods is also highlighted as a fundamental aspect for the country´s cultural development in modern times.

And lastly, this thesis is based on the relevance of understanding the idea of modern art in Nepal in a comparative way to the local customs and creative styles. Not only from its aesthetical point of view, but also understanding them as a ritualistic tool for the worship to the Gods, and highlighting the performative act as an intrinsic part of Nepalese culture since ancient times. In such sense, both modern and traditional art are characterised by:

a) Being a visual narrative of legends and myths that emphasised Kings and Gods, or the figure of the modern artist in current times.
b) Being inspired by the mountain scenery surrounding the cultural area of Kathmandu, while imitating its forms through different architectural styles and sculptures, or abstract painting compositions in the case of modern art.
c) Being hybrid, due to its capacity of absorption of other cultures and religions throughout its different historical periods, which leads to the understanding of the adoption of the Western styles as something natural within its cultural parameters.
d) And being ephemeral, or in a permanent mood of change, due to the people´s performative interaction with the anthropomorphic shape of a divine being. Thus the ritual practice must be considered as a fundamental factor in the process of making art in Nepal, in both traditional and modern times.

State of the question

The present work has been accomplished thanks to the financial support of the Ayuda del Programa de Formación de Profesorado Universitario (FPU), reference FPU13/03715, offered by the Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, Gobierno de España, between the years 2014-2018.

The idea of studying and analysing the historical development of modern art in Nepal came to me after my first visit to the Himalayan country in 2012, when I had the chance to visit a contemporary art fair that takes place every three years in the capital. The *Kathmandu International Art Fair (KIAF),* organised by Shiddhartha Art Gallery, gathered the latest tendencies and Nepalese contemporary artists with the aim of denouncing the increase of pollution in Kathmandu Valley.

It has to be said that, in spite of the relevance that the development of modern art has had in the development of the idea of Nepal up to the present day, the international community has remained oblivious of this fact. The few existing approximations to the theme in question have been mainly written by local art historians and critics, such as is the case of Deepak Shimkhada´s book *Nepal. Nostalgia and Modernity*, 2011, or also Madan Chitrakar and his works *Nepali Painting through the Ages*, 2017 and *Nepali Art. Issues Miscellany,* 2012.

A particular fact with regard to the local promotion of modern art is the familiar support in times of highlighting certain figures as representative of the latest history of art in the country. We can see in the book *Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. Icon of a Transition*, 2004 written by Madan Chitrakar as the artist´s son, or Dina Bangdel´s *Against the Current. The Life of Lain Singh Bangdel. Writer, Painter and Art Historian of Nepal*, 2004, in which she offers us a complete and useful biography of her father´s life as a modern artist.

In addition the present research has had access to relevant and unpublished manuscripts, which have been translated to English language. This include Ram Kumar Bhaukajee´s PhD dissertation "*Contemporary Paintings of Nepal*, *1988*" translated from the Russian language by Tatiana Voronina, or "*The Spheres of Postmodern Arts, 2015*" written by the art critic Mukesh Malla and translated from the Nepali by Tara Lal Shrestha, among many others that can be consulted in the bibliography of this work.

On the other hand, in spite of the fact that the study of modern art in this country presents an innovative matter in the international academic background, there are some Western authors whose work has to be highlighted as a fundamental complement to this one. Firstly, Professor Michael Hutt is highlighted due to his studies about modern poetry and literature in Nepal, such as *Himalayan Voices. An Introduction to Modern Nepali Literature*, 1991, and *Nepal in the Nineties. Versions of the Past, Visions of the Future*, 1994. Besides other relevant works that analyse the political situation during the Rana period and their cultural exchange with the European countries, such as *Jang Bahadur in Europe. The First Nepalese Mission to the West*, published in 1983 by Professor John Whelpton.

Similarly, in order to analyse the situation of modern art from a sociological perspective, some of the recent anthropological studies about current Nepal have been useful for such end. In this regard, Professor Gerard Toffin and his studies about the *newār* community in Kathmandu Valley have been of foremost importance for the development of this research, highlighting his most recent publications *Imagination & Realities. Nepal between Past and Present*, 2016, and *From Monarchy to Republic. Essays on Changing Nepal*, 2013. Also, Professor Mark Liechty and his research concerning the consequences that modernisation has brought to the Nepalese society through his works *Far Out. Countercultural Seekers and the Tourist Encounter in Nepal*, 2017 and *Out Here in Kathmandu. Modernity on the Global Periphery*, 2010.

However, due to the lack of information on this theme in general, the field work has been an essential part of this unpublished research. Accordingly, between the months of January and April, 2015, I worked as a guest researcher at the Kathmandu University School of Art and Design (KUART), and part of MCube Art Gallery´s "Researcher in Residency" programme, as an initial approach to the creative situation in the capital. However, the information gathered during this visit would not be completed until 2017, when I was given the opportunity to work again in Kathmandu as a guest researcher at the Social Science Baha (SSB) between the months of April and August of that year, thanks to which I became closer to the final conclusions of this project.

With this aim, an exhaustive process of interviews and meetings with more than sixty modern artists and art critics was accomplished in bot periods, as well as the collection of exhibition catalogues, photographs and articles which back up the historical facts provided by them.

Besides, an exhaustive search for archives, bibliography and information was made at the Martin Chautari research center´s library, the Archaeological Department of Kathmandu, or the Siddhartha Art Gallery archives. However, most relevant were the publications of the newspaper *The Rising Nepal* from 1960 to 1990, available at the *Gorkhapatra* archives, due to the significant amount of relevant documentation provided with regard the field of study. Similarly, the process of fieldwork initiated in Kathmandu could have never been fulfilled without the additional information gathered during my visits to the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library archives in Delhi, the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan in Darjeeling and the Government Art School in Calcutta. Besides, the Archives Nationales in Pierrefitte and the Kandinsky Library in Pompidou, Paris, the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and the British Library, London, and my short trips to Stuttgart, Germany, were also relevant sources of information.

Approaching methodology

According to Liechty, to do research in places like Nepal is needed the combination of two concepts: the performance so as to understand how people produce culture in an active way with dramaturgical overtones, and the narrativity as a tool to analyse the drama that is performed[4]. It is following such words how the ritualistic pattern of the mandala has been chosen as a visual strategy for approaching this research as a guideline through which the Himalayan scenario is metaphorically depicted, and where the concepts of traditional and modern art are addressed in a parallel way.

[4] Mark Liechty*, Suitably Modern. Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society* (Kathmandu: Martin Chautari, 2008), 23-24.

Broadly speaking, the mandala consists of a geometrical design that represents the cosmos in small scale, a map of the universe used as a mediation between the mundane and divine worlds. Thus, its "organised abstraction" can only be defined through metaphorical patterns where each sphere represents the different stages of the process of creation of the Universe. The origins of this mandalic universe are explained through the theory of *sāṃkhya*, according to which it was the interaction between *puruṣa*, impassible consciousness symbol of space, and *prakṛti*, energy of nature and symbol of time, which produced the illusory matter, or maya, that forms the world of today[5]. Therefore, similarly to the cyclic change between the dry season and the monsoon, the mandala has to be read following a spiral process, from the outside to the inside, until the practitioner meets with the divine being at its central part, the *bindu*, where the worshipper finally reaches the illumination stage[6].

During this process of worship, the faculty of imagination has to be taken into account as a fundamental part of it. According to Ellingson, the geometrical-structure of a mandala is something which must be mentally visualised and only afterwards materialised, initially by vocal and gestural interactions, and later by its graphic representation[7]. In a similar way, the imagination is a concept that must be also highlighted as something intrinsically connected with the building of *Nepāl*-mandala where, according to Toffin, "the manifold realities that Nepalese people deal with are impregnated with imagined symbols and religious representations"[8].

Consequently, it is through the imaginative parameters of the mandala that we come to realise the ritualistic rhythm implicit in Kathmandu´s theatrical scenario, where the idea of art is understood as part of the performance developed around it. In other words, in the same way as the mandala is used as a guide to connect with the gods of Nepal, modern art is a means for social globalisation through new practices of consumerism of the foreignness, that are usually performed by the middle and upper classes of the country.

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[5] Anil Rajvanshi, "Origin and Evolution of Universe," Boloji (blog), March 29, 2017, http://www.boloji.com/index.cfm?md=Content&sd=Articles&ArticleID=14227

[6] S. K. Ramachandra Rao, *Tantra Mantra Yantra. The Tantra Psychology* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1979).

[7] Ter Ellingson, "The Mathematics of Newār Buddhist Music," in *Change and Continuity. Studies in the Nepalese Culture of the Kathmandu Valley*, 1996, edited by Lienhard Springfield, 447-462 (Torino: Edizioni dell`Orso).

[8] Toffin, *Imagination & Realities*, 14-17.

Issues and solutions

On the other hand, it is only through the application of this performative methodology that this project gives an answer to the number of handicaps faced during this research, which would be impossible to approach from a merely theoretical analysis.

1. Firstly, the history of modern art in Nepal is characterised by presenting a significant amount of contradictory information, partly due to the lack of proper documentation, but also due to the tendency of highlighting certain artists in the creative scenario of Kathmandu while others are obviated. This work considers these contradictions as relevant sources during the process of fieldwork, as they depart from the local custom of recounting myths and fairy tales about relevant figures, such as gods or kings. Nevertheless, the information provided has always been carefully verified through diverse sources such as press articles, photographs or exhibition catalogues.

2. Also, the rumours that reveal the dubious authorship of certain acknowledged artists with regard to their works of art are analysed from the difference between the local artist and the artisan within their social ranks. Therefore, while the category of the artist was mostly given to the *guru* or priest who created the piece through the process of visualisation, the artisan was perceived as a medium or tool through which the visualised piece was materialised in an anonymous way. In this sense, when comparing such traditional process of making art with the actual case of modern art, the possibility that the modern artist also counted on the help of anonymous artisans capable of materialising his innovative ideas with the new techniques, becomes a comprehensible fact within the country´s cultural frame.

3. Lastly, the visual study of modern art in Nepal during the Panchayat period has been a particular challenge due to the small amount of artworks, in spite of more than a century of creative experimentation. Again, this situation has to be analysed in a comparative way with the traditional scenario. Since as well as in traditional art the piece was created on the aim of serving as a guide or complement to the ritualistic practice, modern art is also to be

comprehended not only from its aesthetics, but most importantly from its performative utility, in which the figure of the modern artist and the art exhibition are to be taken into account as inseparable parts of the art work in itself, or even more important than it.

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Therefore, departing from the idea of the mandala both from its aesthetical and performative sense, the concepts of time and space are structured through this research in the following way:

a) In its spatial sense, the mandala is approached as an aesthetical metaphor that depicts Kathmandu´s architectural scenario from its mountains to its durbars. But also a methodological form of structuring the index of the present work, which departs from the foreign fascination for the Himalayan mountain range and ends with development of modern art in the Kathmandu Valley.
b) And from its temporal frame, the mandala is understood as a guide where the contrasted terminologies of traditional and modern art are considered as complementary concepts developed throughout the same point of time, and therefore complementary to each other.

a) Historical development: The mandalic concept of time

The mandalic concept of time, in its never-ending spiral sense, is normally represented by tantric Gods such as Kali, Goddess of Time, through whose dance worships the cosmic process of creation, preservation and destruction, for everything to be created again[9]. It is by following such a round trip temporal idea how the historical terminologies of traditional and modern art become understood as complementary concepts developed within the same point of time.

As Ranger states, the "ancient traditions" are to be seen as a recently "invented" acts[10]. In Nepal this act has to be seen as a tribal response to the global times, emphasising the national feeling through the invention of a local identity. With this in mind, Toffin proposes a clarification on the temporality applied to the aesthetical study of art in Nepal, where the boundaries between traditional, modern and contemporary art, are to be seen as a continuous flux of influences between each other. According to him, "contemporary art is the result of the combination between the traditional and the modern, with a considerable diversity of styles"[11].

Precisely, it would be the nostalgic promotion of ancient Nepal and the exaltation of its tradition in modern times what would become the main source of triumph of the Panchayat system and its political ideals, using modern art as an impulse to create collective acts of memory around the icons of the mountain, the King and the traditional culture of Nepal. Therefore, even if these temporal styles are established through a linear frame of time for its logical comprehension, it must be stated that the ideas of traditional and modern art in Nepal must be always addressed in a parallel way.

However, the historical processes of modern art development within an exact time frame of time is still a contested matter among the local and foreign critics. For instance many authors, such as Toffin, highlight that Nepal was only exposed to modernity since

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[9] The name of Kali is also applied to the idea of the Kali Yuga, the era of destruction in which we are currently immersed and last of the four cycles or Yugas that form one kalpa, a single day in the life of *Brahmā*. According to the beliefs, it will be after a hundred years of Brahman´s deaths and resurrections when the whole Universe will collapse and a new cosmic era will start. In Philippe Rawson, *The art of Tantra.* (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[10] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[11] Gerard Toffin, *Imagination & Realities. Nepal between Past and Present* (New Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2016), 154.

1951, underlining the fact that although the Rana rulers adopted European goods and styles since 1850, the local population could not receive them as these products were imported as exclusive items for the Nepalese elite[12]. Nevertheless, since one of the main hypothesis of this work is that the avant-garde trend is to be considered as an elitist art within the Nepalese social milieu, this research establishes the onset of modern art since the 1850s and the adoption of the picturesque styles as a first and significant step towards the country´s creative development.

Thus, this work defines the aesthetical and temporal terminologies of Nepalese art according to the chart below, in which the history is divided between the political situations of each moment and the type of aesthetics developed as a consequence, taking into account that modern time should not be considered on the same grounds as modern art[13].

Political History	**Art History**
Pre-modern *Nepāl* (ancient-1768)	Traditional aesthetics (ancient - 1850)
Modern Nepal (1768-2001)	Modern aesthetics (1850-1990)
Post-modern Nepal (2001- now)	Contemporary aesthetics (1990- now)

According to this, the development of "modern aesthetics" is framed since the start of the Rana period, due to the introduction of the picturesque trends through their contact with the British Empire in India. And ends with the onset of "contemporary art" at the fall of the Panchayat regime, and the adoption of new forms of creative expressions, such as installation or performance art, coinciding with the rise of new political ideologies in the country.

[12] Ibid., 133.

[13] With this regard, Calinescu establishes frame of "modern time" after onset of the Industrial Revolt, and "modern aesthetics" as the national creative acts that arose as a consequence of the "modern time" and paradoxically against them. In Calinescu, *Cinco caras de la modernidad,* 50-74.

At the same time, and following the mandalic structure that constitutes the main body of the present work, the category of "modern aesthetics" is divided into the following steps:

Modern aesthetics (1850-1990)	
1850-1950	Picturesque realism
1950-1962	Experimental avant-garde / Kitsch commercial art
1962-1975	Modern "Nepaliness"
1975-1990	Ironical art

b) Structural development: The mandalic concept of space

The sacred pattern of the mandala has been also chosen as a guideline through which the spatial sense of the Himalayan scenario is depicted in a metaphorical way. Hence, reading such structural pattern from the outside to the inside, the theatrical scenario of Kathmandu Valley´s is understood as follows:

a)		The outer part, the circle, represents the Himalayan mountain range.

b)		The middle part, the square, represents Kathmandu´s architectonical and traditional scenario.
c)		And the inner part, the *bindu*, represents the people´s interaction in such performative scene, through their daily rituals and festivals.

Thus, in order to establish a structural analysis about the diverse aesthetical movements developed within the frame of modern art, the present work divides the mandalic pattern into the following stages:

a) In the mandala´s outer part, the concepts of myth and imagination are applied to the study of the picturesque styles developed through the Ranas´ elitist art, due to the introduction of realistic portraiture and landscape painting in Nepal (1850-1950).

b) In between the outer and middle part of the mandala, the rise of the kitsch commercial art and the new experimental trends with the avant-garde styles are analysed, as a consequence of the opening of the country and the arrival of tourists in the Valley of the Gods (1950-1962).

c) The mandala´s middle part is dedicated to the enhancement of the nostalgia for traditional Nepal particularly since the onset of the Panchayat times, as a way to represent the nation through the avant-garde tendencies that always follow the "Nepaliness" idea (1962-1975).

d) And finally, at the central part, the subject of irony is analysed through the metaphorical depictions and cartoon developed since the second Panchayat period up to the revolution times (1975-1990).

Synthesis

Initially, this work introduces *The Kingdom of the Himalaya* to provide an answer to elemental questions such as "what is Nepal", and "what does it mean to be Nepalese". In this sense, the idea of Nepal is presented here as a double mandala in which the comprehension of the nation is divided in between the Kingdom of the Himalaya, or *Gorkhārajya*, on the one hand, and a more localised cultural connection with Kathmandu Valley´s area, or ancient *Nepāl*, on the other[14]. Therefore and in a similar way, the "to be Nepalese" identity issue is analysed according to its double meaning of being a Nepalese-Gurkhali, or someone who belongs to the Kingdom of the Himalaya, or a Nepalese-*newāri*, or the one who belongs to Kathmandu or ancient *Nepāl*.

The second part of this introduction proposes a brief review about the cultural aspects of Kathmandu Valley and its basic characteristics from an historical point of view. Among which the relevance of the King as the centre of *Nepāl*-mandala and the main promoter of its cultural development is to be highlighted as a traditional custom also to be noted during the Rana and Panchayat periods. In addition, the historical aspects of ancient *Nepāl* are illustrated with the scientific works produced by the first foreign researchers and anthropologists who resided in the Kathmandu Valley during the first half of the 19th century. It was from these studies, done in the modern times, from where the idea of the traditional art of Nepal was formulated at an early stage.

Departing from such ideas *Part One. "Orientalism" / "Occidentalism". A round trip exoticism*, analyses the onset of modernity in the country as a consequence of a process in which while the foreigner exoticises Nepal, Nepal exoticises the foreigner. Therefore, this part starts by presenting the first encounters of these foreign researchers with the Himalayan range and the adoption of the picturesque outlook as an ideal way to represent the mountains in accordance with the popular imaginary of Nepal as the Kingdom of Shangri-La.

At the same time, these new pictorial elements were hybridised with the local styles, underlining the pioneer case of Raj Man Singh Chitrakar (1797-1865) during his years of collaboration with Mr. Brian Houghton Hodgson (1800-1894) for the illustration of the

[14] In ancient times the name *Nepāl* referred only to the area embracing the Kathmandu Valley, being "Nepal" not applied to the whole Himalayan Kingdom until 1930.

flora, fauna and cultures of the Himalaya. It is necessary to highlight the training of this *citrakār* as a *paubhā* traditional painter in diverse aspects of his modern art works, such as the lack of shadows, use of brilliant colours and plain perspectives. Also, it should be noted that in later stages the *paubhā* painting style would start to show a gradual transformation and break with the traditional norms, by representing the divinities with more humanised features against photographic backgrounds. Such as in the cases of Ananda Muni Shakya (died 1945) or Manik Man Chitrakar (1908-1987).

Likewise, the picturesque style imported from the West appealed to the Rana elite as an exclusive way of representing their superior status towards the national and international world. Consequently, these rulers started to commission large amounts of self-portraits, sculptures and palaces, been tools for the exaltation of their own figures as a quasi-divine beings. But also they used the Western styles to protect the Kingdom of the Himalaya from foreign invasions, by broadcasting a national and empowered image of the country, between the Terai Jangle and the impassable Himalayan peaks. This is apparent in the Gallery Bhaitak where Prime Minister Juddha Shumshere Rana (1932-1945) ordered a series of symbolic murals depicting a tiger hunt in the border area with British India.

In such context, those *citrakār* painters capable of mastering the Western techniques and picturesque styles started to experiment a gradual uplift in the social scale, being hired as court painters for the portraying of nobles and Kings during the early Shah and Rana period. It is shown in the early works of Bhaju Man Chitrakar (1817-1874) who participated in Jang Bahadur Rana´s historical trip to European lands as a court painter. But also Bal Krishna Sama (1903-1981), Chandra Man Singh Maskey (1900-1984) and Tej Bahadur Chitrakar (1898-1971), the last two chosen to receive their training at the Government Art School of Calcutta. In a time that coincided with the upsurge of the "traditionalist" Bengal School of art, as a new wave of development and local creative response against British colonialism in India.

Part Two. Between tradition and avant-garde, focuses on the consequences that the first democratic period brought Nepal to a new era of modern creativity during the 1950s. On the one hand, due to the opening of the country and the increase arrival of foreigners visiting Nepal in search for the mystical land of Shangri-La, a new style of kitsch painting was developed from the previous picturesque trends. This was a way to commercialise the icons of the Kathmandu Valley and the Himalaya as a "made in Nepal" cultural souvenir. But even if these kitsch commercial paintings have often been tagged as

"westernised" forms of art, they have also to be compared with the particular aesthetics of traditional *paubhā* art, especially through the use basic and brilliant colours, and absence shadowy areas on the canvass surface. On the other hand, the modern artists previously employed by the Rana rulers as court painters, started to hybridise the picturesque outlook with the Mughal styles, in order to represent Kathmandu Valley´s cultural heritage and it´s daily life. In such a way, the basis of the "Nepaliness" idea was established, to be further developed as a significant aspect of modern art during the Panchayat period.

At the same time, it has to be said that the 1950s were also a representative period with regard the upsurge of the new avant-garde trends imported from Western countries. Eager to experiment with these innovative techniques and encouraged by the democratic promises of freedom of expression, a few but a significant number of young painters started to apply the abstract tendencies in their works, while the first exhibitions of modern art were organised in Kathmandu as exclusive events for the new elite. For instance, the case of the abstract painter Gehendra Man Amatya (1937) and his first show in 1956 at the Nepal-Bharat Sankritik Kendra. But also other figures who in those times came back to Nepal after receiving their Fine Arts studies in India, like the etcher Urmila Upadayay Garg (1939), or Keshava Duvadi (1921-1997) and his paintings done in the Bengal School of Art style.

However, it would not be until the first retrospective of Lain Singh Bangdel (1919-2002) in 1962, when the official history of modern art in Nepal started, coinciding with the onset of the Panchayat era. Born in Darjeeling, Bangdel was a superb writer and painter trained at L´Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris who, in spite of holding an Indian passport, he always presented himself as a Nepalese artist in exile. A fact that was reflected in his first works based on semi-realistic representations of the people of the Himalaya, and particularly inspired in Picasso´s Blue Period. In a similar way, as belonging to *Gorkhārajya*, in later stages Bangdel transformed his painting style into abstract representations inspired by the Himalayan mountain scene. A tendency that can also be applied to other Nepalese painters in exile, such as Laxman Shrestha (1939) and his mountain imageries produced in Mumbai. Or the expressionist paintings of Virendra Subba (died 2016), also from Darjeeling, whose works were exhibited several times in Kathmandu during the early stages of the Panchayat period.

In *Part Three. The King´s creative mandala*, the process of establishment of the "Nepaliness" idea in modern art is understood as a result of the cultural exchange and round trip fascination between the West and Nepal. In this way, the Nepal Art Council (NAC) organised exhibitions with the reproductions of Western paintings, imported into the country in order to encourage the implementation of such styles in Kathmandu. At the same time, many traditional art pieces were sent to foreign countries and exhibited in Nepalese art exhibitions, as a way to promote the ancient richness of the Kingdom of the Himalaya to the international world. Therefore, as a consequence of the local fascination for the Western art forms and the foreigner's preference for the exotic styles of traditional Nepal, the "Nepaliness" idea started to be applied in modern art as a way to represent the nation as a modernised country, but conveniently rooted in the pre-modern times as a symbol of its cultural identity.

In order to encourage and drive the development of national modern art according to the "Nepaliness" requirements, King Mahendra inaugurated the Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA) in 1965, as a public institution idealised for the support of visual arts through the organisation of the *National Art Exhibitions,* celebrated on a yearly basis for Prince Birendra´s birthday. However, it was not until the *Second National Art Exhibition*, when the "Nepaliness" idea was implemented, giving encouragement towards the depiction of the rural area as a political way to promote the "Back to the Village National Campaign", set up by the Panchayat regime in 1966. For this reason, the theme of the village started to be the main inspiration for many artists such as Uttam Nepali (1937), who in 1968 presented his *Back to the Village* exhibition at Max Gallery, the unique private art gallery in Kathmandu during those times.

Therefore, due to the need of representing the rural scene and the relevance of preserving the national culture, by the 1970s the avant-garde movement started to experiment a process of set-back towards the picturesque styles previously developed. A pioneer school in the promotion of such enterprise was the "Evening Art Class" at Park Gallery, organised by the experimental artist Rama Nanda Joshi (1938-1988), with the aim of promoting the art of easel painting and the creative inspiration from the direct observation of the Himalaya and the Kathmandu Valley´s cultural heritage[15].

[15] Banshee Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art* (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006).

As a consequence of this, and in a parallel way, the idea of "magic surrealism" appeared as a derivation of the social realism imported by Ram Kumar Bhaukhajee (c. 1950) and Bipin Guimirey (c. 1960) after receiving their fine arts degrees in Moscow. This tencency would be further developed by the October Gallery, especially due to its collaboration with Jagadish Chitrakar (1947), whose first works of art were characterised by representing the rooftops Kathmandu Valley in a surreal way, and exhibited in Europe along with the similar paintings of Manohar Man Poon (1914-1990) and the expressionist scenes of Shashikala Tiwari (1950).

Finally, *Part Four. Behind the mountain´s smile*, starts by addressing the relevance of the ancient culture of Nepal as a symbol of the "national identity", the "neo-traditional" styles presented as a new form of "Nepaliness" according to the hippy aesthetics. Such is the case of Batsa Gopal Vaidya (1945) and his creative practice with the "neo-tantric" technique, imported in Nepal once he had finished his Fine Arts studies at the Sir J.J. School of Art in Mumbai. Therefore, it can be said that by the 1970s the Nepalese modern art scene was characterised by presenting a particular amalgam of diverse tendencies, but with the common aim of emphasising the "Nepaliness" according to the Panchayat´s national ideals. This was appreciated in the diversity of styles adopted by the SKIB-71 group of artists, composed by a group of Nepalese students at the Sir J.J. School of Art in Mumbai, such as the mentioned Batsa Gopal Vaidya, along with the surreal works of Shashi Bikram Shah (1940) and the expressionist depictions of Krishna Manandhar (1947) and Indra Pradhan (1944-1995).

On the other hand, due to the paradoxes which emerged between the supposed freedom and social rights obtained after the fall of the Ranas and the control that the Panchayat system imposed on Nepalese modern art, this chapter departs from the hypothesis that many of these young creators started to use the ironical tool for establishing a subtle criticism against the political situation of the time, while still following the "Nepaliness" official requirements in a superficial way. In this regard, the *gai jātra* festival became particularly relevant as an opportunity for the public exhibition of these polemical illustrations without fear of being censored, although such exhibitions were always supervised by King Birendra´s presence at the Royal Nepal Academy (RNA). It was during these times when, following the example of SKIB-71, the Junkiree artists group would be inaugurated by a group of Nepalese students at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), among whom Birendra Prataph Singh (1956) and Kiran Manandhar (1957) are highlighted. Once back in Nepal, these two artists would open the Sirjana and

Palpasa art galleries respectively, while encouraging the development of modern art in Nepal through two completely diverse styles. Concretely, the Sirjana Art Gallery was characterised as a hub for the most polemical artists, and from where a new movement of political art through the ironical cartoon was configured. While, on the other hand, the Palpasa Art Gallery carried on with the promotion of the picturesque tendency, mixed with the avant-garde styles.

Besides, this part underlines the relevance of understanding modern art of Nepal with a double-meaning, in which the performance of becoming "modern artist" is analysed as a theatrical action that contrasts with the ironical factor implicit behind the suitable "Nepaliness" in their creations. A significant example is the case of Manuj Babhu Mishra (1936-2018), whose performative attitude, always loyal to the Panchayat regime, is contradicted by the violence implicit in his mysterious paintings and self-portraits. A double aspect that would represent the antechamber of the performative practices produced after 1990, symbolically adopted in contemporary art as new tools to express the political idealisms "beyond the canvass", such is the pioneer case of Subina Shrestha (1977) and her political performance in 1996. Also, due to the acknowledgement of Nepal as a multicultural country and the "Nepalipann" idea, the contemporary art scene started to experiment a "traditionalisation" while adopting the folk styles as new forms of national inspiration. As with the Mithila style, popularised as the basic tendency of many Nepalese artists in the present time. But also the re-appropriation of the ancient techniques of making art, such as in the case of *paubhā* painting and its return to the traditional norms and styles, although this time for aesthetical and non-ritualistic aims. Establishing in this way the general characteristics of the current scene of contemporary art in Nepal, and arriving in this way to the final conclusions of this work.

In addition, the following annexes are developed in order to complement the information provided:

Annex 1. It is a brief presentation of the artists mentioned, with their biographies, art works and extracts of their interviews done in Kathmandu between 2015 and 2017.

Annex 2. Develops a chronological framework in which all the national and international art exhibitions archived at *The Rising Nepal* are organised, from 1960 to 1990.

Memoria: En torno a un mandala

Las nuevas tendencias en el arte nepalí fueron introducidas en el siglo XIX como consecuencia de la presencia de los estilos creativos occidentales en la India británica, siendo desarrolladas a lo largo de los períodos Rana y post-Rana. Sin embargo, sería solo desde el inicio del sistema político Panchayat cuando un estilo contemporáneo más nacionalizado comenzaría a ser adoptado como una práctica visual híbrida, resultado de unir los estilos de pintura occidental y la cultura tradicional de Nepal, o "nepalidad", como herramienta para promover la nación de forma internacional.

Por lo tanto, siguiendo la idea "*made in Nepal*" a fin de enfatizar los aspectos culturales del estado-nación hacia el mundo global, el desarrollo del arte contemporáneo en el país, consistió básicamente en la representación de su patrimonio mezclado con las nueva técnicas y diversos estilos de vanguardia. A fin de analizar esta situación, el presente trabajo divide la historia del arte contemporáneo nepalí en las siguientes corrientes:

a) En una primera etapa el arte pintoresco fue desarrollado por los pintores británicos en la cordillera del Himalaya, y adoptado por la élite local como una herramienta para la representación de su estatus social como superior, o casi divino. Para ello, se apropiaron de la mirada pintoresca con el fin de crear fondos mágicos y oníricos que enfatizaban su figura como "Gobernantes de Nepal" con una actitud *performativa*, o singularmente teatral[16].
b) Desde la década de 1950, debido al advenimiento del turismo en el País de los Dioses, las tendencias pintorescas introdujeron un desarrollo gradual hacia un estilo de pintura *kitsch*, a través del cual Nepal comenzaría a ser representado como un encantador escenario de montaña de acuerdo con el mito de Shangri-

[16] Lo pintoresco sería en primer lugar definido por William Gilpin como "algo entre lo bello y lo sublime", enfatizando la belleza de lo áspero de un paisaje "en la corteza de un árbol, los pedregosos campos de montañas…" o incluso un escenario arquitectónico. En William Gilpin, *Three Essays: on* Picturesque *Beauty; on* Picturesque *Travel; and on Sketching Landscape* (London: R. Blamire, 1972).

La[17]. Al mismo tiempo que la llegada de influencias extranjeras provocaron enfoques innovadores y experimentos creativos con los nuevos estilos vanguardistas importados desde Occidente[18].

c) Y finalmente, durante los tiempos del sistema Panchayat, la idea nacional de la "nepalidad" aplicada al arte contemporáneo se configuró como una mezcla de la mirada pintoresca y el estilo *kitsch*, junto a las tendencias de vanguardia. Lo cual se desarrolló con el objetivo de resaltar la relevancia de la cultura antigua del país para su promoción internacional, así como enfatizar el sentimiento de identidad nacional en la comunidad local.

Aclaraciones

Dado que esta investigación se presenta con el objetivo de establecer una reconstrucción histórica de los diversos pasos que conformaron la base del escenario de arte actual en Nepal, ciertos aspectos deben ser aclarados para evitar posibles malentendidos.

1. Por un lado, debido al extenso período de tiempo comprendido en el presente trabajo, no es posible mencionar a todos y cada uno de los artistas involucrados en este movimiento. En lugar de ello, se examina una selección de los artistas más importantes de manera representativa. Por la misma razón, este trabajo no habla de todas las exposiciones de arte o galerías que se abrieron durante ese período de tiempo, sino que se concentra en las principales instituciones y eventos, siendo esto complementado con la información agregada en los anexos.

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[17] De acuerdo con la novela de James Hilton Lost Horizon, Shangri-La era una ciudad mágica perdida en el medio de la cordillera himaláyica. A pesar de que esta ciudad está localizada en Tibet, su imaginario también se puede aplicar al Valle de Katmandú. En James Hilton, *Lost Horizon* (United Kingdom: Macmillan, 1933).

18 La idea de lo *kitsch* es definida por Calinescu como un símbolo inequívoco de modernización y una forma estética de comercializar la belleza de acuerdo a los gustos de la clase media y el resurgir del consumismo en la comunidad de Nepal. En Matei Calinescu, *Cinco caras de la modernidad. Modernismo, vanguardia, decadencia, "kitsch", postmodernismo.* Trans. María Teresa Beguiristain (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 222-236.

2. Asimismo, debe decirse que este trabajo nunca fue planteado con el objetivo de hacer una comparación exhaustiva con la situación del arte contemporáneo en India. Por tanto, a pesar de que en numerosas ocasiones se menciona su caso, debido a su innegable influencia en la evolución del arte nepalí, este trabajo presenta el Reino del Himalaya como independiente y con un camino evolutivo necesariamente diferente al de su país vecino.
3. Por último, aunque en muchas ocasiones ha sido necesario un enfoque antropológico para el análisis de la situación, debe quedar claro que el principal compromiso de este trabajo es histórico, dejando las pistas antropológicas como preguntas abiertas que podrán ser adecuadamente desarrolladas por profesionales en el campo en etapas posteriores.

Hipótesis

El presente estudio parte de las siguientes hipótesis:

La primera establece que el arte contemporáneo nepalí se desarrolló principalmente como consecuencia de la introducción de los estilos occidentales y técnicas contemporáneas en el país del Himalaya, pero también debido a la invención exótica de Nepal y su cultura tradicional de acuerdo con la idea romántica de Shangri-La.

En consecuencia, el arte contemporáneo fue promovido como una herramienta visual con los propósitos de:

a) Proyectar la nación de Nepal y su identidad cultural como atracción turística, fomentando así su desarrollo a través del ingreso económico internacional.
b) Y proyectar la idea de Nepal como un país modernizado, a través de la apropiación de estilos extranjeros como símbolos de distinción exclusivamente diseñados para la élite del país.

La segunda hipótesis es que el desarrollo del arte contemporáneo se ha establecido en torno al tema de la identidad nacional y la invención de la cultura tradicional de este país en los tiempos modernos. Subrayando el sentido comunitario de pertenecer a Nepal

como una idea que ha evolucionado alrededor de la figura del Rey dentro del área cultural del Valle de Katmandú, mientras se obvian las diferentes etnias que habitan en el Himalaya multicultural. Esto se debe a que:

a) Durante muchos años, los estudios académicos occidentales se han concentrado principalmente en Katmandú y el arte desarrollado por la etnia de los *newār*, o la casta de los artistas, siendo esto elegido como el icono cultural del país de cara al mundo internacional.
b) Al mismo tiempo, así como en la antigüedad la construcción del patrimonio cultural del Valle de Katmandú fue liderada y encargada por los gobernantes de las diferentes dinastías, la relevancia del Primer Ministro o Rey en la época Rana o Panchayat debe de ser destacada como aspecto fundamental en el desarrollo cultural del país en la modernidad.

Y, por último, esta tesis se basa en la importancia de comprender la idea del "arte contemporáneo" en Nepal de forma comparativa con las costumbres y estilos creativos a nivel local. No solo desde su punto de vista estético, sino también entendidos como una herramienta ritual utilizada durante el culto a los dioses, y por tanto subrayando el acto *performativo* como algo intrínseco a la cultura nepalí desde tiempos remotos. En este sentido, tanto el arte contemporáneo como el tradicional se caracterizan por:

a) Representar una narrativa visual de mitos y leyendas que enfatizan Reyes y dioses, o la figura del artista contemporáneo en la modernidad.
b) Estar inspirado en el imaginario montañoso que rodea el área cultural de Katmandú, imitando sus formas a través de los diferentes estilos arquitectónicos y escultóricos, o también composiciones abstractas en el arte contemporáneo.
c) Ser híbrido, debido a su capacidad natural de absorción de otras culturas y religiones a lo largo de sus diferentes períodos históricos, lo que conlleva a la compresión de la adopción de los estilos occidentales como algo natural dentro de sus parámetros.
d) Y ser efímero, o encontrarse en un modo de cambio permanente, debido a la interacción *performativa* del pueblo con la figura antropomórfica de una divinidad. Por lo que la práctica ritual debe de ser considerada como un factor fundamental en el proceso de hacer arte en Nepal, tanto en la tradición como en la modernidad.

Estado de la cuestión

El presente trabajo ha sido realizado gracias a la Ayuda del Programa de Formación de Profesorado Universitario (FPU), referencia FPU13/03715, otorgada por el Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, Gobierno de España, entre los años 2014-2018.

La idea de estudiar y analizar el desarrollo histórico del arte contemporáneo en Nepal surgió después de mi primera estancia en el país himaláyico en 2012, cuando tuve la oportunidad de visitar una feria de arte contemporáneo celebrada cada tres años en la capital. *The Kathmandú International Art Fair (KIAF)*, organizada por la Shiddhartha Art Gallery, reunía a las últimas tendencias y artistas contemporáneos nepalíes con el objetivo de denunciar el creciente problema de la contaminación en el Valle de Katmandú.

Podría decirse que, a pesar de la relevancia que el arte contemporáneo ha tenido en el desarrollo de la idea de Nepal hasta el día de hoy, la comunidad internacional ha permanecido prácticamente ajena a este hecho. Siendo las pocas aproximaciones existentes con respecto al tema en cuestión principalmente escritas por historiadores y críticos de arte locales, como es el caso de Deepak Shimkada y su libro *Nepal. Nostalgia and Modernity*, 2011, o también Madan Chitrakar y sus obras *Nepali Painting through the Ages*, 2017 y *Nepali Art. Issues Miscellany*, 2012.

Un hecho particular con respecto a la promoción local del arte contemporáneo nepalí es el apoyo familiar a la hora de resaltar ciertas figuras como representativas en la historia del arte más reciente del país. Como podemos ver en el libro *Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. Icon of a Transition*, 2004 escrito por Madan Chitrakar como el hijo del artista, o Dina Bangdel y su obra *Against the Current. The Life of Lain Singh Bangdel. Writer, Painter and Art Historian of Nepal*, 2004, a través de la cual nos ofrece una biografía útil y completa sobre la vida de su padre como artista moderno.

Asimismo, la presente investigación ha utilizado un número significativo de manuscritos inéditos y relevantes, traducidos al inglés. Lo cual incluye la tesis de doctoral de Ram Kumar Bhaukajee "*Contemporary Paintings of Nepal, 1988*" traducida del ruso por Tatiana Voronina, o "*The Spheres of Postmodern Arts, 2015*" escrito por el crítico de arte Mukesh Malla y traducido del nepalí por Tara Lal Shrestha, entre muchos otros que pueden ser consultados en la sección bibliográfica de este trabajo.

Por otro lado, a pesar de que el estudio del arte contemporáneo en este país presenta un tema innovador en el contexto académico internacional, existen algunos autores occidentales cuyo trabajo debe destacarse como un complemento fundamental de esta investigación. En primer lugar, el profesor Michael Hutt por sus estudios sobre poesía contemporánea y literatura en Nepal, como su trabajo *Himalayan Voices. An Introduction to Modern Nepali Literature*, 1991, y *Nepal in the Nineties. Versions of the Past, Visions of the Future*, 1994. Además de otros trabajos relevantes que analizan la situación política durante el período de Rana y su intercambio cultural con Europa, como *Jang Bahadur in Europe. The First Nepalese Mission to the West*, publicado en 1983 por el profesor John Whelpton.

De la misma manera, a la hora de analizar la situación del arte contemporáneo desde una perspectiva sociológica, los recientes estudios antropológicos sobre el Nepal actual han resultado ser muy útiles para tal fin. En este sentido, el profesor Gerard Toffin y sus estudios sobre la comunidad de los *newār* en el Valle de Katmandú, destacando sus publicaciones más recientes *Imagination & Realities. Nepal between Past and Present*, 2016, y *From Monarchy to Republic. Essays on Changing Nepal*, 2013. O también el trabajo del profesor Mark Liechty y su investigación sobre las consecuencias que la modernización ha traído a la sociedad nepalí a través de sus obras *Far Out. Countercultural Seekers and the Tourist Encounter in Nepal*, 2017 y *Out Here in Kathmandu. Modernity on the Global Periphery*, 2010.

Sin embargo, debido a la falta de información sobre el asunto del arte contemporáneo nepalí en general, el trabajo de campo ha resultado ser una parte esencial de esta investigación. Es por ello que entre los meses de enero y abril, 2015, viajé a Nepal para trabajar como investigadora invitada de la Kathmandu University School of Art and Design (KUART), y parte del programa de "Investigadores en Residencia" de la MCube Art Gallery, realizando así un primer acercamiento a la situación creativa en la capital. Por otro lado, la información reunida durante esta estancia inicial no sería completada hasta 2017, cuando tuve la oportunidad de volver a trabajar en Katmandú como investigadora invitada por el Social Science Baha (SSB) entre los meses de abril y agosto de ese año, y gracias a la cual pude aproximarme al punto final de este proyecto de investigación.

Con este objetivo, durante ambas estancias se realizó un exhaustivo proceso de entrevistas personales con más de sesenta artistas contemporáneos y críticos de arte durante ambos períodos, así como la recopilación de catálogos de exposiciones,

fotografías y artículos que respaldan los hechos históricos proporcionados por éstos. Además, se realizó una exhaustiva búsqueda de archivos, bibliografía e información a través de la biblioteca del centro de investigación Martin Chautari, el Archaeological Department de Katmandú o los archivos de la Siddhartha Art Gallery entre otros. A este respecto, fueron especialmente relevantes las publicaciones del periódico *The Rising Nepal* desde 1960 hasta 1990, custodiadas en los archivos del *Gorkhapatra*, debido a la cantidad de documentación inédita con respecto al campo de estudio.

Del mismo modo, este trabajo de campo base en Katmandú nunca podría haber concluido adecuadamente sin la información recabada durante mis visitas a los archivos del Nehru Memorial Museum and Library en Nueva Delhi, la Nepali Shaitya Sammelan en Darjeeling, o la Government Art School en Calcuta. Así como la búsqueda de documentación en los Archives Nationales en Pierrefitte y la Kandinsky Library en el Pompidou, Paris; la biblioteca de la School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) y la British Library, Londres; y mis cortos viajes a Stuttgart, Alemania.

Metodología de aproximación

Según Liechty, para investigar en lugares como Nepal se necesita la combinación de dos conceptos: la *performance* para comprender cómo la gente produce su cultura de forma activa con connotaciones dramatúrgicas, y la narrativa como herramienta para analizar el drama que se "*performa*"[19]. Siguiendo estas palabras, el patrón ritual del mandala ha sido elegido como una estrategia visual para la aproximación metodológica de este trabajo, siendo éste utilizado como una guía a través de la cual el escenario himaláyico se representa de forma metafórica, a través del cual los conceptos de arte tradicional y contemporáneo se analizan de forma paralela y no lineal.

[19] Liechty*, Suitably Modern*, 23-24.

El diseño del mandala constituye un mapa geométrico que representa el cosmos a pequeña escala, una guía del universo utilizada como herramienta de mediación entre los mundos terrenal y divino. Por ello, su "abstracción organizada" solo puede definirse a través de patrones metafóricos, donde cada esfera representa diferentes etapas de la conciencia en el proceso de creación. Los orígenes de este universo mandálico se explican a través de la teoría de *sāṃkhya*, según la cual fue la interacción entre *puruṣa*, símbolo de la conciencia impasible del espacio, y *prakṛti*, energía de la naturaleza y símbolo del tiempo, lo que produjo la materia ilusoria o *maya*, que conforma el mundo de hoy[20]. Por tanto, de manera similar al cambio cíclico entre la estación seca y el monzón, el mandala debe leerse siguiendo un proceso en espiral, desde afuera hacia adentro, hasta que el practicante se encuentre con el poder divino en su parte central, el *bindu*, donde el devoto llega finalmente a la etapa de iluminación[21].

Durante este proceso ritual, la facultad de la imaginación ha de ser tenida en cuenta como una parte fundamental del mismo. Según Ellingson, la estructura geométrica del mandala es algo que primero debe visualizarse mentalmente y solo después materializarse, inicialmente mediante interacciones vocales y gestuales, y más tarde mediante su representación gráfica[22]. De forma similar, la imaginación también debe de ser destacada como parte esencial en el proceso de construcción de *Nepāl*-mandala donde, de acuerdo con Toffin, "las múltiples realidades que tratan los nepalíes y otros pueblos del Himalaya se impregnan de imágenes, símbolos y representaciones religiosas"[23].

Por tanto, es a través de los parámetros imaginativos del mandala como llegamos a comprender el ritmo ritual implícito en el escenario teatral de Katmandú, donde la idea del arte contemporáneo se entiende como una parte más de la *performance* desarrollada a su alrededor. En otras palabras, se podría decir que de la misma manera que el mandala tradicional se utiliza como un medio o guía para conectarse con los dioses de Nepal, el arte contemporáneo es un medio de globalización social, a través de nuevas prácticas de consumo de lo foráneo, sobre todo llevadas a cabo por las clases media y alta del país.

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[20] Anil Rajvanshi, "Origin and Evolution of Universe," Boloji (blog), March 29, 2017, http://www.boloji.com/index.cfm?md=Content&sd=Articles&ArticleID=14227

[21] S. K. Ramachandra Rao, *Tantra Mantra Yantra. The Tantra Psychology* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1979).

[22]Ter Ellingson, "The Mathematics of *Newār* Buddhist Music," in *Change and Continuity. Studies in the Nepalese Culture of the Kathmandu Valley*, 1996, edited by Lienhard Springfield, 447-462 (Torino: Edizioni dell`Orso).

[23] Toffin, *Imagination & Realities*, 14-17.

Problemas y soluciones

Por otro lado, es solo a través de la aplicación de esta metodología *performativa* como este proyecto da respuesta a los diversos retos enfrentados durante el proceso de investigación, los cuales son imposibles de abordar desde un análisis meramente teórico.

1. En primer lugar, la historia del arte contemporáneo en Nepal se caracteriza por presentar una cantidad significativa de información contradictoria, en parte debido a la pérdida de documentación que justifique los hechos, pero también debido a la tendencia a exaltar a ciertos artistas en el escenario creativo de Katmandú mientras que otros son obviados. Este trabajo ha considerado tales contradicciones como fuentes relevantes durante el proceso de investigación, ya que parten de la costumbre local de relatar mitos y cuentos de hadas para el ensalzamiento de ciertas figuras importantes, como dioses o reyes. A pesar de que la información provista a través del boca a boca ha sido siempre cuidadosamente verificada a través de artículos de prensa, fotografías o catálogos de exposiciones.

2. Del mismo modo, los rumores que revelan la dudosa autoría de ciertos artistas reconocidos con respecto a sus obras de arte son analizados a partir de la diferencia entre las figuras del artista y el artesano en su estatus social. En este sentido, mientras que antiguamente la categoría de artista se daba principalmente al *guru* o sacerdote que creaba la pieza a través del proceso de visualización, el artesano era visto como un medio o herramienta a través del cual la pieza visualizada se materializaba de forma anónima. Al extrapolar tal modo de hacer arte al caso creativo actual, la posibilidad de que el artista contemporáneo contase con la ayuda de artesanos anónimos capaces de materializar sus ideas con las nuevas técnicas pasa a ser admitida como un hecho comprensible dentro de los márgenes culturales del país.

3. Y por último, debido a la poca cantidad de obras de arte existentes a pesar de más de un siglo de experimentación creativa, el estudio visual del arte contemporáneo

en Nepal durante la época Panchayat se convierte en un desafío bastante peculiar. Una vez más, tal situación debe analizarse de forma comparativa con el escenario tradicional. Ya que así como en el arte antiguo la pieza se creaba con el fin de servir como guía o complemento para la práctica del ritual, el arte contemporáneo también debe ser comprendido, no solo desde su análisis estético, sino sobre todo desde su utilidad *performativa*, a través de la cual la figura del artista contemporáneo y la exposición de arte deben de ser tenidas en cuenta como partes inseparables de la obra en sí, o incluso más importantes que la misma.

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Por tanto, partiendo de la idea del mandala tanto desde su sentido estético como *performativo*, los conceptos de tiempo y espacio de esta tesis doctoral se estructuran de la siguiente manera:

a) En su sentido espacial, el mandala es abordado como una metáfora estética que representa el escenario arquitectónico de Katmandú desde sus montañas hasta sus *durbars*. Pero también una forma metodológica de estructurar el índice del presente trabajo, que parte de la fascinación de los extranjeros por la cordillera del Himalaya y termina con el desarrollo del arte contemporáneo en el Valle de Katmandú.
b) Y desde su marco temporal, el mandala se entiende como una guía donde el arte tradicional y el contemporáneo se consideran conceptos desarrollados en el mismo punto del tiempo, durante la modernidad, y por tanto complementarios entre sí.

a) Desarrollo histórico: el concepto mandálico de tiempo

El concepto mandálico del tiempo, en su infinito sentido espiral, se representa a través por de dioses tántricos como *Kali*, Diosa del Tiempo, quien con su danza adora el proceso cósmico de creación, preservación y destrucción, para que todo vuelva a ser creado de nuevo[24]. Es siguiendo esta idea temporal de ida y vuelta cómo las terminologías históricas de arte tradicional y contemporáneo se entienden como conceptos contrarios, pero desarrollados en el mismo momento.

Siguiendo la afirmación de Ranger de que la "tradición antigua" debe ser vista como un acto recientemente "inventado", en Nepal este acto se analiza como una respuesta tribal a la era global. Es decir, con el único fin de enfatizar el sentimiento nacional a través de la invención de la identidad local[25]. Con respecto a esto, Toffin propone una aclaración sobre la temporalidad aplicada al estudio estético del arte en Nepal, donde las fronteras entre el arte tradicional, contemporáneo y actual, deben verse como un flujo constante de influencias entre cada una de ellas. Según él, "el arte actual es el resultado de la combinación entre lo tradicional y lo contemporáneo, con una considerable diversidad de estilos"[26].

Precisamente, la nostalgia por el antiguo Nepal y la exaltación de su tradición en los tiempos modernos se convertiría en la principal fuente de triunfo del sistema Panchayat y sus ideales políticos, utilizando el arte contemporáneo como un impulso para crear actos colectivos de memoria en torno a los iconos de la montaña, el Rey y la cultura tradicional del país. Por tanto este estudio considera que, a pesar de que el uso de un marco de tiempo lineal es prácticamente inevitable a la hora de abordar el estudio histórico de estos estilos, las ideas de tradición y contemporaneidad deben de ser siempre comprendidos de forma paralela.

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[24] El nombre de *Kali* también se aplica a la idea del *Kali Yuga*, la era de destrucción en la que actualmente estamos inmersos y el último de los cuatro ciclos o *Yugas* que conforman un *kalpa*, un solo día en la vida de *Brahmā*. De acuerdo con las creencias, será después de cien vidas de *Brahman* cuando todo el universo colapsará y comenzará una nueva era cósmica. En Philippe Rawson, *The art of Tantra.* (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[25] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[26] Toffin, *Imagination & Realities,* 155.

Aun a día de hoy, los procesos históricos del desarrollo del arte contemporáneo dentro de un marco de tiempo exacto sigue siendo un tema controvertido entre los críticos locales y extranjeros. Por ejemplo muchos autores, como Toffin, destacan que Nepal solo fue expuesto a la modernidad desde 1951, subrayando el hecho de que aunque los gobernantes de Rana adoptaron los productos y estilos europeos desde 1850, estos no llegaron a la población local al ser importados como bienes de consumo, exclusivos para la élite del país[27]. Sin embargo, dado que una de las principales hipótesis de este trabajo es que la tendencia vanguardista debe ser considerada como un arte elitista dentro del contexto social nepalí, esta investigación establece el inicio del arte contemporáneo desde la década de 1850 y la adopción de los estilos pintorescos como un primer y significativo paso hacia la modernización creativa del país.

Por tanto, este trabajo define las terminologías estéticas y temporales del arte nepalí de acuerdo con el siguiente esquema, en el cual la historia temporal se divide entre las situaciones políticas de cada momento y el tipo de creatividad desarrollada como consecuencia, teniendo en cuenta que la idea de tiempo moderno no debe de ser considerada como igual a la idea de arte contemporáneo[28].

Historia política	**Historia del arte**
Nepāl pre-moderno (antigüedad-1768)	Estética tradicional (antigüedad - 1850)
Nepal moderno (1768-2001)	Estética contemporánea (1850-1990)
Nepal post-moderno (2001- hoy)	Estética actual (1990-hoy)

Según este esquema, el desarrollo de la estética contemporánea se enmarca desde el comienzo del período Rana, debido a la introducción de las tendencias pintorescas occidentales a través de su contacto con el Imperio británico en India. Mientras que el

[27] Ibid., 133.

[28] En este sentido, Calinescu establece el marco del tiempo moderno después del inicio de la Revuelta Industrial, y la estética contemporánea como los actos creativos nacionales que surgieron como consecuencia de la modernidad y, paradójicamente, contra ella. En Calinescu, *Cinco caras de la modernidad,* 50-74.

inicio del arte actual se inicia desde la caída del régimen de Panchayat y la adopción de nuevas formas de expresión creativa como instalación, video, grafiti o artes *performativas*, al mismo tiempo que surgen las nuevas ideologías políticas.

Por tanto, siguiendo la estructura mandálica que constituye el cuerpo principal de la presente investigación, el marco de la estética contemporánea se divide en las siguientes corrientes creativas:

Estética contemporánea (1850-1990)	
1850-1950	realismo pintoresco
1950-1962	vanguardia experimental / arte *kitch* comercial
1962-1975	"nepalidad" contemporánea
1975-1990	Arte irónico

b) Desarrollo estructural: el concepto mandálico de espacio

El patrón sagrado del mandala también se utiliza en este trabajo como una guía a través de la cual el sentido espacial del escenario himaláyico se representa de una manera metafórica. De este modo, al seguir este patrón de fuera hacia adentro, el escenario teatral del Valle de Katmandú se estructura de la siguiente manera:

a)		La parte exterior, el círculo, representa la cordillera del Himalaya.

b)		La parte media, el cuadrado, representa el escenario arquitectónico y tradicional de Katmandú.
c)		Y la parte interna, el *bindu*, representa la interacción del pueblo en dicha escena *performativa*, a través de ritos y festivales.

De forma paralela, a fin de establecer un análisis estructural sobre los diversos movimientos estéticos desarrollados dentro del marco de la contemporaneidad, el patrón mandálico se divide de la siguiente manera:

a) En la parte externa del mandala, los conceptos de mito e imaginación se aplican al estudio de los estilos pintorescos desarrollados a través del arte elitista de Rana, debido a la introducción del retrato realista y la pintura de paisaje en el arte nepalí (1850-1950).
b) Entre la parte externa e intermedia del mandala, se analiza el comienzo del arte comercial *kitsch* y las nuevas tendencias de experimentación con los estilos de vanguardia, como consecuencia de la apertura de Nepal y la llegada de turistas al Valle de los Dioses (1950-1962).
c) La parte central del mandala está dedicada a ensalzar la nostalgia por el Nepal tradicional particularmente desde el inicio de los tiempos Panchayat, como una forma de representar a la nación a través de las tendencias de vanguardia, pero siempre siguiendo la idea de "nepalidad" (1962-1975).
d) Y finalmente en la parte central, el tema de la ironía se analiza a través de representaciones metafóricas y el *cartoon* desarrollado desde el segundo período de Panchayat hasta los tiempos de la revolución (1975-1990).

Desarrollo

En una primera fase, este trabajo introduce *El Reino del Himalaya* con el objetivo de responder a ciertas preguntas elementales como "¿qué es Nepal?" y "¿qué significa ser nepalí?". En este sentido, la idea de Nepal se presenta aquí como un doble mandala en el que la comprensión de la nación se divide entre el Reino de Himalaya, o *Gorkhārajya*, por un lado, y una conexión cultural más localizada con el área del Valle de Katmandú, o el antiguo *Nepāl*, por el otro[29]. Por tanto, y de forma paralela, la identidad del ciudadano nepalí se analiza de acuerdo con la doble nacionalidad de ser nepalí-*Ghurkali*, o alguien que pertenece al Reino del Himalaya, o ser nepalí-*newār*, o aquel que pertenece a Katmandú o al antiguo *Nepāl*.

Asimismo, la segunda parte del capítulo introductorio propone una breve reseña sobre los aspectos culturales del Valle de Katmandú y sus características básicas desde un punto de vista histórico. Entre las cuales cabe destacar la importancia del Rey como centro de *Nepāl*-mandala y principal promotor de su desarrollo cultural como una costumbre tradicional que también se observa durante los períodos Rana y Panchayat. Los aspectos históricos del *Nepāl* antiguo se ilustran con los trabajos científicos realizados por los primeros investigadores extranjeros y antropólogos que residieron en Katmandú durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX. Fue a partir de estos estudios, hechos en los tiempos modernos, desde donde la idea del arte tradicional de Nepal comenzó a conformarse en su estadio inicial.

Partiendo de tales ideas, *Parte Uno. "Orientalismo"/"Occidentalismo". Un exotismo de ida y vuelta*, analiza el inicio de la modernidad en el país como consecuencia de un proceso en el que mientras el extranjero mitifica a Nepal, Nepal mitifica al extranjero. Por tanto, esta parte comienza presentando los primeros encuentros de estos investigadores extranjeros con la cordillera del Himalaya y la adopción de la técnica pintoresca como una forma ideal de representar las montañas, de acuerdo con el imaginario popular de Nepal como el Reino de Shangri-La.

[29] Antiguamente el nombre de *Nepāl* se aplicaba únicamente al área concerniente al Valle de Katmandú, siendo el de "Nepal" adaptado a todo el Reino himaláyico en 1930.

Al mismo tiempo, este capítulo estudia cómo estos elementos pictóricos se hibridan con los estilos locales, subrayando el caso pionero de Raj Man Singh Chitrakar (1797-1865) y sus años de colaboración con el Sr. Brian Houghton Hodgson (1800- 1894) a fin de ilustrar la flora, la fauna y las culturas del Himalaya. Es necesario subrayar la formación de este *citrakār* como pintor *paubhā* tradicional en diversos aspectos de su obra contemporánea, como la ausencia de sombras, uso de colores brillantes y perspectivas planas. Asimismo debe decirse que, en etapas posteriores, la pintura *paubhā* también comenzaría a experimentar una transformación gradual y ruptura con la norma tradicional, al representar a las divinidades con características más humanizadas contra fondos fotográficos. Tal es el caso de Ananda Muni Shakya (fallecido en 1945) o Manik Man Chitrakar (1908-1987).

Por tanto, el estilo pintoresco importado de occidente atrajo a la elite Rana como una manera exclusiva de proyectar su condición de superioridad hacia el mundo nacional e internacional. En consecuencia, estos gobernantes comenzaron a encargar grandes cantidades de retratos, esculturas y palacios como herramientas para la exaltación de su figura como seres casi divinos. Pero también para proteger el Reino del Himalaya de la invasión extranjera mediante la difusión de una imagen nacional poderosa, entre la selva del Terai y el infranqueable Himalaya. Esto se demuestra en el caso de la Galería Bhaitak, en la cual el Primer Ministro Juddha Shumshere Rana (1932-1945) mandó pintar una serie de simbólicos murales que representaban la cacería del tigre en la zona fronteriza con la India Británica.

Aquellos pintores *citrakār* capaces de dominar las técnicas occidentales y los estilos pintorescos comenzaron a experimentar un ascenso gradual en la escala social, siendo contratados como pintores de la corte para la representación de nobles y reyes durante el período inicial de Shah y Rana. Un ejemplo importante es el de Bhaju Man Chitrakar (1817-1874) que participó en el viaje histórico de Jang Bahadur Rana a tierras europeas como pintor de la corte. Pero también el de Bal Krishna Sama (1903-1981), Chandra Man Singh Maskey (1900-1984) y Tej Bahadur Chitrakar (1898-1971), los dos últimos elegidos para recibir su formación en el arte realista en la Government Art School de Calcuta. Coincidiendo con el surgimiento de la tradicionalista Escuela de Bengala en India como una nueva ola de desarrollo y respuesta creativa local contra el colonialismo británico.

A continuación, *Parte Dos. Entre la tradición y la vanguardia*, se centra en las consecuencias que el primer período democrático trajo a la creatividad contemporánea nepalí durante la década de 1950. Por un lado, debido a la apertura del país y a la llegada masiva de cientos de extranjeros llegados a Nepal en busca de la tierra mística de Shangri-La, se desarrolló un nuevo estilo de pintura *kitsch* a partir de las previas tendencias pintorescas, como un modo de comercializar los iconos del Valle de Katmandú y el Himalaya como *souvenir* cultural "*made in Nepal*". Pero incluso si estas pinturas comerciales de *kitsch* a menudo han sido etiquetadas como formas de arte "occidentalizadas", también han de ser comparadas con la estética particular del arte *paubhā* tradicional, sobre todo a través del uso de colores básicos y brillantes, y la ausencia de áreas oscuras en la superficie del lienzo. Mientras que los artistas contemporáneos previamente empleados por los Rana como pintores de la corte comenzaron a hibridar la mirada pintoresca con el estilo Mogol a fin de representar el patrimonio cultural del Valle de Katmandú y su vida diaria. De esta manera la base de la idea de "nepalidad" fue establecida para ser desarrollada como un aspecto significativo del arte contemporáneo a lo largo del período Panchayat.

Por otro lado, los años 50 fueron también un período representativo con respecto al surgimiento de las nuevas tendencias vanguardistas importadas de los países occidentales. Deseosos de experimentar con estas técnicas innovadoras y alentados por las promesas democráticas de la libertad de expresión, un pequeño pero significativo número de jóvenes pintores comenzaron a aplicar las tendencias abstractas en sus obras de arte, mientras que las primeras exposiciones de arte contemporáneo se organizaron en la capital de Katmandú como eventos exclusivos para la élite nepalí. Tal es el caso del pintor abstracto Gehendra Man Amatya (1937) y su primera exhibición en 1956 en la Nepal-Bharat Sankritik Kendra, pero también otras figuras que en aquellos tiempos regresaron a Nepal después de recibir su formación en Bellas Artes en las universidades de India, como la grabadora abstracta Urmila Upadayay Garg (1939), o Keshava Duvadi (1921-1997) con su pintura hecha al estilo de la Escuela de Bengala.

Sin embargo, no sería hasta la primera retrospectiva de Lain Singh Bangdel (1919-2002) en 1962 cuando la historia del arte contemporáneo nepalí dio comienzo de manera oficial, coincidiendo con el comienzo de la era Panchayat. Nacido en Darjeeling, Bangdel fue un excelente escritor y pintor formado en L'Ecole des Beaux Arts en París quien, a pesar de tener pasaporte indio, siempre se presentaba a sí mismo como un artista nepalí en el exilio. Lo cual se reflejaba constantemente en sus primeras obras basadas en

representaciones semi-realistas de las gentes del Himalaya, y particularmente inspiradas en el Período Azul de Picasso. Del mismo modo, oriundo de *Gorkhārajya*, en etapas posteriores Bangdel transformó su estilo de pintura en representaciones abstractas inspiradas en el Himalaya. Esta tendencia también puede ser aplicada a otros pintores nepalís en el exilio, como Laxman Shrestha (1939) y sus imaginarios de montaña hechos en Mumbai. También el artista de Darjeeling Virendra Subba (fallecido en 2016), cuyas pinturas expresionistas fueron varias veces exhibidas Katmandú durante los comienzos del período Panchayat.

En la *Tercera Parte. El mandala creativo del Rey*, se analiza el establecimiento de la idea de "nepalidad" como resultado del intercambio cultural y fascinación de ida y vuelta entre Occidente y Nepal. De esta manera, el Nepal Art Council (NAC) organizaba exposiciones con las reproducciones de pinturas occidentales importadas con el fin de fomentar la implementación de tales estilos en Katmandú. Al mismo tiempo, muchas piezas de arte tradicional fueron enviadas al extranjero y exhibidas en exposiciones de arte nepalí, como una forma de promover la antigua riqueza del Reino del Himalaya a nivel internacional. Por tanto, como consecuencia de la creciente fascinación local por las formas artísticas occidentales y la preferencia del extranjero por los antiguos y exóticos estilos del Nepal tradicional, la idea de "nepalidad" comenzó a aplicarse en el arte contemporáneo como una forma de representar la nación como un país modernizado, pero convenientemente arraigado en los tiempos pre-modernos como símbolo de su identidad cultural.

A fin de alentar y dirigir el desarrollo del arte contemporáneo nacional según los requisitos de la "nepalidad", el Rey Mahendra inauguró la Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA) en 1965, como una institución pública idealizada para el apoyo de las artes visuales a través de la organización de las *National Art Exhibitions* celebradas anualmente por el cumpleaños del Príncipe Birendra. Sin embargo, no fue hasta la *Second National Art Exhibition* cuando la idea de "nepalidad" comenzó a ser oficialmente implementada en torno al paisaje rural, como una forma de promover la "*Back to the Village National Campaign*" idealizada por el régimen Panchayat en 1966. Debido a ello, el tema de la aldea nepalí comenzó a ser inspiración para muchos artistas como Uttam Nepali (1937), quien en 1968 presentó su exhibición *Back to the Village* en Max Gallery, como la única galería de arte de Katmandú por aquellos tiempos.

Fue debido a la necesidad de representar el escenario rural y la importancia de preservar la cultura nacional, por lo que en la década de los 70 el movimiento de

vanguardia comenzó a experimentar un proceso de retroceso hacia los estilos pintorescos desarrollados con anterioridad. Una escuela pionera en la promoción de tal empresa fue la "*Evening Art Class*" en Park Gallery, organizada por el pintor experimental Rama Nanda Joshi (1938-1988) con la intención de promover la pintura de caballete e inspiración creativa a partir de la observación directa del Himalaya y la herencia cultural del Valle de Katmandú[30].

A consecuencia de ello, y de forma casi paralela, surgió la idea del "surrealismo mágico" como una derivación del movimiento creativo del Realismo Socialista importado por Ram Kumar Bhaukajee (c. 1950) y Bipin Guimirey (c. 1960) tras recibir su formación en Bellas Artes en Moscú. Esta idea fue particularmente apoyada por la October Gallery, especialmente debido a su colaboración con Jagadish Chitrakar (1947), cuyas primeras obras de arte se caracterizaban por representar los tejados del valle de Katmandú de forma surrealista, y que fueron exhibidas en Europa junto con las pinturas similares de Manohar Man Poon (1914-1990) y los escenarios expresionistas de Shashikala Tiwari (1950).

Finalmente *Parte Cuatro. Tras la sonrisa de la montaña*, comienza resaltando la importancia de la cultura antigua de Nepal como símbolo de la identidad nacional, y la tendencia del arte "neo-tradicional" como un nuevo modo de "nepalidad" adaptado al uso y reinterpretación del arte antiguo, de acuerdo con la estética *hippie*. Tal es el caso de Batsa Gopal Vaidya (1945) y su práctica creativa con la técnica "neo-tántrica", importada en Nepal una vez hubo finalizado sus estudios en Bellas Artes en la Sir J.J. School of Arts de Mumbai. Asimismo, se analiza cómo a partir de los 70 la escena del arte contemporáneo nepalí comenzó a presentar una amalgama de tendencias, aparentemente diversas, pero con el objetivo común de enfatizar la "nepalidad" de acuerdo con los ideales del sistema Panchayat. Esto se aprecia en la diversidad de estilos adoptados por el colectivo de artistas SKIB-71, compuesto por un grupo de estudiantes nepalíes de la Sir J.J. School of Arts en Mumbai entre los cuales estaba Batsa Gopal Vaidya, junto con la obra surrealista de Shashi Bikram Shah (1940), y las pinturas expresionistas Krishna Manandhar (1947) e Indra Pradhan (1944-1995).

Por otro lado, debido a las paradojas surgidas entre la supuesta libertad y los derechos sociales obtenidos después de la caída de Rana y el control que el sistema Panchayat impuso al desarrollo del arte contemporáneo nepalí, este capítulo parte de la

[30] Banshee Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art* (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006).

hipótesis de que muchos de estos jóvenes creadores comenzaron a utilizar la herramienta de la ironía para establecer una crítica sutil contra la situación política del momento, al tiempo que correspondían con los requisitos oficiales de la "nepalidad" de una manera superficial. En este sentido, el festival *gai jātra* cobró especial relevancia como una oportunidad para la exhibición pública de estas polémicas ilustraciones sin miedo de ser censuradas, a pesar de que dichas exposiciones estaban siempre supervisadas por la presencia del Rey Birendra en la Royal Nepal Academy (RNA). Fue en este período cuando, siguiendo el ejemplo de SKIB-71, un grupo de estudiantes nepalíes de la Banarass Hindu University (BHU) inauguraron el colectivo Junkiree, entre los cuales cabe destacar a Birendra Prataph Singh (1956) y Kiran Manandhar (1957). Una vez de vuelta en Nepal, estos dos artistas abrirían las galerías de arte Sirjana y Palpasa respectivamente, mientras alentaban el desarrollo del arte contemporáneo de Nepal de forma completamente diferente. Concretamente, la galería Sirjana se caracterizó por ser el núcleo de reunión de los artistas más polémicos de la época, configurando el nuevo movimiento arte político a través de la ironía del *cartoon*. Mientras que, por otro lado, la galería Palpasa continuó promocionando la tendencia pintoresca mezclada con las características del arte de vanguardia.

De forma paralela, este capítulo subraya la importancia de comprender el arte contemporáneo de Nepal con un doble significado, a través del cual la *performance* de ser artista contemporáneo se analiza como una acción teatral que contrasta con el factor irónico, implícito tras la adecuada "nepalidad" de estas creaciones. Un ejemplo significativo es el caso de Manuj Babhu Mishra (1936-2018), cuya actitud *performativa,* siempre leal al sistema Panchayat, se contradice por la violencia implícita en sus misteriosas obras y auto-retratos. Este aspecto particular, sería la antesala de las prácticas *performativas* desarrolladas después de 1990, simbólicamente adoptadas en el arte actual como nuevas herramienta para expresar los ideales políticos "más allá del lienzo". Tal es el caso pionero de Subina Shrestha (1977) y su *performance* de 1996. En estos tiempos, debido al reconocimiento oficial de Nepal como un país multicultural y el establecimiento de la idea de "Nepalipann", la escena del arte actual comenzó a experimentar una creciente "tradicionalización", adoptando los estilos *folk* como nuevas formas de inspiración nacional. Tal el caso del estilo Mithila, popularizado como la tendencia base de muchos artistas nepalíes a día de hoy. Pero también la reapropiación de las técnicas antiguas de hacer el arte, como en el caso de la pintura *paubhā* y su retorno hacia la normativa tradicional, aunque esta vez cumpliendo un objetivo meramente estético y no

ritual, y llegando de este modo a establecer las características generales del arte actual de Nepal, y planteado la conclusiones finales de este trabajo en general.

Además, esta tesis presenta los siguientes anexos a modo de complemento al tema central:

Anexo 1. Consiste en una breve presentación de los artistas mencionados, con sus biografías, obras de arte y extractos de sus entrevistas realizadas en Katmandú entre el 2015 y el 2017.

Anexo 2. Desarrolla un marco cronológico en el que las exposiciones de arte nacionales e internacionales archivadas en *The Rising Nepal* se organizan detalladamente, desde 1960 hasta 1990.

Notes on Transliteration

1) For **Sanskrit** words, the glossary published by Fernández del Campo, Eva. *El Arte de India. Historia e historias*. Madrid: Editorial AKAL, 2013, and transcribed from the Devanagari script.

2) For **Nepali** words, the database of Ralph Lilley Turner, *A comparative and etymological dictionary of the Nepali language* (London, 1931) Digital Dictionaries of South Asia http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/turner/, and transcribed from the Devanagari script.

a	अ
ā	आ ा
i	इ ि
ī	ई ी
u	उ ु
ū	ऊ ू
ṛ	ऋ ृ
e	ए े
ai	ऐ ै
o	ओ ो
au	औ ौ

k	क	**kh**	ख		
g	ग	**gh**	घ	**ṅ**	ङ
c	च	**ch**	छ		
j	ज	**jh**	झ	**ñ**	ञ
ṭ	ट	**ṭh**	ठ		
ḍ	ड	**ḍh**	ढ	**ṇ**	ण
t	त	**th**	थ		
d	द	**dh**	ध	**n**	न
p	प	**ph**	फ		
b	ब	**bh**	भ		
m	म				
y	य				
r	र् ्				
l	ल				
v	व				
ś	श	**ṣ**	ष	**s**	स
h	ह				

Notes on citation style

1) The references of this work have been cited according to the Chicago Style, 16th edition, while following *The Chicago Manual of Style* 16th edition, published by The University of Chicago: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/contents.html

2) With regard the unpublished translations, it has been preferred to address these special cases while following the established norm for the "unpublished manuscripts" written on the Chicago Style, 16th edition, manual. For instance:

    - Singh, Narayan Bahadur. "*The History of Contemporary Nepali Painting*. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy, 1976." Translated by Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015.
    - Joshi, Harihar Raj. "Shree Prince Birendra a Thought: NAFA a System. *Annual Journal of NAFA* (1966)." Translated by Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015.

Introduction

The Kingdom of the Himalaya

A scarf of pure white snow
Hangs down from its head to its feet,
Cascades like strings of pearls
Glisten on its breast,
A net of drizzling cloud
Encircles its waist like a grey woollen shawl:
An outstanding sight, still and bright,
Our blessed Himalaya.

Lekhnath Paudyal (1885-1966), Himalaya[31].

When thinking about Nepal, the first image that comes into our mind is that of an endless, immaculately white, mountain landscape. Located at the very centre of the sheer Himalayan mountain range, the Nepalese Kingdom is popular for embracing the highest mountains in the world, some of them measuring more than 6.000 meters above the sea. Originated after the clash of the Indian and Tibetan tectonic plates, this range extends for more than 2.400 kilometers in length, running from Kashmir in the western part to Urma in the east, forming an impenetrable barrier that has for centuries divided and connected the cultures of North and South Asia.

Source of the most diverse legends and myths, these peaks are worshipped as divine beings from ancient times. In every Asian culture the birth of this chain, rising majestically above the clouds, is traditionally attributed to the creative power of the Goddess and the natural elements, such as rivers, lakes or trees, which are believed to be inhabited by ancient spirits and whose anger has to be calmed down through daily rituals. Accordingly, for Tibetan people the Himalaya is represented by Palden Lhamo, a giant over whose body the mountain range rises, and whose movements are the cause of the frequent seismic happenings in its different parts. For India, Nepal´s sheer landscape is

[31] Michael Hutt, *Himalayan Voices. An Introduction to Modern Nepali Literature* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 28.

perceived as if it would be the terrible *Cāmuṇḍā*, a form of Durga in her most wrathful representations: Dancing full of blood and dressed with human skins, while displaying her strength with ten powerful arms disposed around her body in mandalic composition.

As a landlocked country, Nepal has always been a unique contact zone between northern and southern influences, due to which it has a multicultural heritage essentially hybrid, in particular different areas. Therefore, and broadly speaking, the ethnic groups of Nepal can be divided into five types depending on their settlement. Within the hills we have, on the one hand, the *parbatiyā*, or "peoples of the mountain", who follow a Hindu caste system and speak Nepali and, on the other, the Buddhist groups belonging to the Tibeto-Burman languages. In the southern Terai Jangles, we have mainly Hindus such as Brahman, *chettri* and *madhyadeśī* who follow a characteristically Indian culture. And finally, inside the central valleys these two religions meet through the *newār* ethnic group, who are believed to be the original inhabitants of Kathmandu.

Fig. 1: Map of Nepal. Source: Pitzer College, accessed June 18, 2015, https://www.pitzer.edu/study-abroad/pitzer-students/nepal/nepal-map/

The Kathmandu Valley, capital of Nepal, has for centuries been highlighted as the most enchanting cultural icon of the whole Himalayan country. Already back in the 18th century Giuseppe de Rovato described his perceptions of the Valley as an "amphitheatre covered with populous towns and villages"[32]. Also Alexandra David Neel (1868-1969)

[32] Giuseppe de Rovato, *Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, vol. 2. of *Asiatic Researches*. (London: Vernor and Hood, 1799), 307.

would use these terms in reference to the marvellous and picturesque scenario of Bhatgaon, one of the Valley´s major settlements, referring to it as "something unreal on its buildings. One has the impression of being immersed in a theatrical scenario amongst its decorados"[33].

These series of poetical descriptions of Nepal, the Country of the Gods, that are even now fully alive in the West´s imaginative minds.

As a living museum, Kathmandu is nowadays characterised by its diverse cultures, religions, and peoples coming from different countries and economic backgrounds. Among such a multicultural landscape there is a mixture of ancient and restored temples, traditional houses transformed into hotels or art galleries, huge and void Rana palaces, or modern-style concrete houses adorned with advertising banners. When walking through the city´s narrow streets decorated with prayer flags loaded with dust of time, thousands of colourful stores intermingle Western musical tones with the sound of temple bells and the endless Buddhist mantra *auṃ maṇipadme hūṃ*. The *newār* shopkeepers welcome tourists with a namaste and charming smile, the street children extend little hands while pleading for "one euro, please". Motorbikes, bicycles and dwellers of different ethnicities try to make their way, while sweet aromas get mixed with incense scents, fried food and the Himalayan refreshing winds. And of course, we cannot forget about the Gods. Hundreds of Gods and Goddesses are placed in their shrines, the trees, or directly on the floor, carved in wood or stone, either in wrathful or serene forms. Who impassively observe the daily lives of Kathmandu dwellers, while being worshipped with their corresponding puja placed at their feet or pasted on their foreheads.

Fig. 2: Goddess Durga, Patan, c. 17th century. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

However, in spite of its welcoming appearance at first sight, the true approach to the Kingdom of the Himalaya may be metaphorically compared to the climbing of any of its peaks. In this regard, Toffin considers the idea of Nepal as an open-close society, as

[33]Alexandra David-Neel, *En el corazón del Himalaya: por los caminos de Katmandú.* Trans. María Tabuyo and Agustín López. Ed. José J. de Olañeta (Palma de Mallorca: Terra Incognita, 2008), 80.

even if it´s political frontiers were open to the outer world since the 1950s pro-democratic revolution, it has to be said that this country is still rooted in pre-modern patterns of life, thus its process of modernisation is full of dichotomies[34]. For instance, at the Belgrade´s Non-Aligned Conference celebrated in 1961, King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah (1920-1972) presented Nepal as an independent country and peace-loving nation[35]. But paradoxically, over the later part of the 20th century and early 21st century, the country witnessed the most violent events, even ending up in a Civil War (1996-2006). On the other hand, the annual arrival of thousands of tourists brought about influential changes in the Nepalese people's mind-set. However it is curious to observe that, at the same time, the process of local "tribalisation" became emphasised in a sort of round trip movement that provoked an increasing sense of "nationalisation" and, later, the "regionalisation" of the Nepalese cultural identity.

Besides, at the same time as the Nepalese people were enduring such processes of modernisation, the foreigner's fascination for the Nepalese ancient culture led to the romantic promotion of ancient Kathmandu and destination of huge amounts of foreign income for its preservation[36]. Consequently, as both the Nepalese and Western visitors began to be conscious of the economic value of their cultural heritage many of the ancient sculptures available around the Nepalese capital, significantly defined by Jurgen Schick as an "open treasure where the art could be seen, touched and worshipped by everyone", were gradually stolen by international mafias that substituted the God´s traditional place of worship for new crystal-built shrines at foreign art collections[37].

Finally, these dichotomies are even more obvious when highlighting that, in spite its international popularity as a "mountain resort", in 2017 Kathmandu was declared as one of the most polluted cities in the world[38]. Indeed, in contrast with the cleaner landscape scene seen in earlier decades, nowadays a thick halo of grey smoke covers the sky in a permanent mist that shows the Himalayan mountain peaks in fewer occasions.

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[34] Toffin, *Imagination & Realities*, 6.

[35] Govinda Malla, *Politics of Foreign Aid in Nepal* (New Delhi: Androit Publishers, 2012), 9.

[36] For instance, it was not until the 1990s when the ancient Malla palace of Patan Durbar Square was restored for Bernardo Bertolucci´s film Little Buddha, where its picturesque scenario was chosen to represent Prince Siddhartha´s royal palace.

[37] Jurgen Schick, *The Gods are Leaving the Country. Art Theft from Nepal.* Trans. Philip H. Pierce (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 1998), 28-37.

[38] Mausam Shah Nepali, "Nepal´s Kathmandu ranks 5th in Pollution Index 2017," *The Himalayan Times*, July 05, 2017, accessed February 28, 2018, https://theHimalayantimes.com/nepal/nepals-kathmandu-ranks-5th-in-pollution-index-2017/

Similarly, the unbearable smell of the sacred rivers, full of garbage and plastic bags, pleads for a prompt solution to be taken. While in the trekking areas both the absence of a proper cleaning system as well as a lack of consciousness and respect are the reasons for beautiful holy places, such as Mount Everest, to be sadly devastated rubbish spread around.

Having said this, how could the historical aspects of Nepalese modern art be confronted, if the enchanting idea of Nepal reflected in these artworks do not really exist anymore?

Accordingly, this thesis studies the process of hybridisation of the local creativity of Nepal with the Western aesthetics, in order to represent the idea of Nepal according to the international framework, but also as a means of unification of the Himalayan multicultural aspects, populated with more than sixty ethnicities and cultures living in "comparmentalised local topographies with few equivalents in the world", around a single culture and country[39]. In particular regard to the multicultural essence of the Kingdom of the Himalaya, this work unveils the idea of Nepal as a nation-state as a utopia established according to what Anderson referred to as *Imagined Communities*[40]. In other words, an idea generated as a consequence of both the global modernisation and local capitalisation.

Since the analysis of modern art in Nepal becomes an impossible task without taking into account the process of the establishment of this country as a nation-state and its traditional culture as the national identity, the following introduction has been focused on the issues of "what is Nepal" and "what does it mean to be Nepalese". Both important aspects during the formation of the modern country, and the basis from where the developing path of art in current times is analysed.

[39] Toffin, *Imagination & Realities*, 20.

[40] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 7.

1. The nation of Nepal. A double mandala.

Fig. 3: The Himalayan mountain range, c. 1960. Source: Photo courtesy of Colonel Gerry Birch, 2016.

It seems that the Himalayan territory that embraces current Nepal was mentioned for the first time in a pillar at Allahabad dated of Samudra Gupta´s times (336-76), where this land was referred to as a "frontier state" and its King described as one who "paid tribute" and "obeyed orders from the Imperial Masters"[41]. However, it has to be said that while in ancient times the name *Nepāl* was used as a reference only to the Kathmandu Valley, the broader idea of "Nepal" was not applied to the whole Kingdom until 1930, during the times of maharaja Chandra Shumshere Jang Bahadur Rana (1863-1929)[42].

In order to explain the social and cultural implications that the double idea of Nepal versus *Nepāl* meant for the developing aspects of modern art, the following chapter is focused on the historical introduction to the Kingdom of the Himalaya in modern times, while establishing a convenient background from where the main subject of this work can be defined in further chapters. Thus, following Gellner´s frame of time, the modern period of Nepal may be divided into the following stages[43]:

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[41] William. B. Northey, *The Land of the Gurkhas or the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*. (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1998), 4.

[42] Bughart proposes to name Kathmandu Valley or *Nepāl* with a macron, in order to distinguish it from the current and broader Nepal. Richard Burghart, "The Formation of the Concept of Nation-State in Nepal," *The Journal of Asian Studies,* 44 (1984): 105.

[43] Gellner, David. N. et al., *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom. The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal* (The Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 7.

MODERN NEPAL		
Year	**Dynasty**	**Founder**
1769-1846	The early Shah period	Prithvi Narayan Shah (1722-1775)
1846-1951	The Rana period	Jang Bahadur Rana (1817-1877)
1951-1962	The late Shah period, the transition	Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah (1906-1955)
1962-1990	The Panchayat	Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah (1920-1972) Birendra Bir Bikram Shah (1945-2001)

1.1. The political development of a nation: From *Gorkhārajya* to Nepal.

In order to speak about the Kingdom of Nepal we have to go back to the 18th century, when its vast territory was divided into forty six principalities: Twenty-two in the Karnaki region of Western Nepal, and twenty-four in the Gandaki region of central Nepal, and ruled by different tribal chiefs with diverse languages and cultures. One of these principalities was the state of Gorkha, which is historically significant as the place from where King Prithvi Narayan Shah (1722-1775) would bravely conquer the whole Himalayan area, initially naming it Greater Gorkha or *Gorkhārajya*[44].

But in spite of its relevance to the modern history of the country, it has to be said that the principality of Gorkha was one of the youngest and less powerful districts in southwest Nepal. According to the legend, the name of this area was adopted from the saint *Gorakhnāth*, a Hindu sage who resided in this area after having been neglected by

[44] Tulasi R. Vaidya, *Pritvinarayan Shah. The Founder of Modern Nepal* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1993), 39.

the residents of Kathmandu Valley. Deeply offended for this behaviour, *Gorakhnāth* caused a tremendous draught in the Valley by seizing all the Naga, Gods of rain, thus impelling the monsoon to come for twelve long years, until the King of *Nepāl* decided to call Lord *Macchendrānāth* to persuade him to liberate them. The history follows with *Gorakhnāth* leaving the Valley and settling down in a little village in the south, named Gorkha after the saint promised the villagers his eternal protection in exchange for avenging on his behalf by occupying the Kathmandu Valley[45].

Already when the young King Prithvi Narayan Shah started his campaign to conquer the Himalaya the British East Indian Company, founded in 1599, was trying to expand its influence by establishing friendly agreements with the different Kingdoms of the Indian subcontinent. As a strategic point of commercial expansion, the Himalaya had always been an ambition of the Company, thus the British sent the Kinloch expedition in order to assist King Jaya Prakash Malla (died 1768), the last Malla ruler of Kathmandu, to gain the special favour of the northern area. Nevertheless, due to the handicaps and natural difficulties they faced on their way towards the Kathmandu Valley, the expedition arrived in such a weak condition that it was easy for the Gurkhali to defeat them in the battle of Sindhuli Gadhi of 1767[46]. As a result, in 1768 Prithvi Narayan finally proclaimed himself as King of the Himalaya while establishing the idea of Nepal as a nation-state[47].

Over the early Shah period the British East Indian Company persisted in their aim to establish a policy of friendship with the Gurkhali in *Nepāl*. However, Greater Gorkha would firmly maintain its isolated position until the onset of the 19th century, when a different environment among the Anglo-Nepalese political relations was set up[48]. During those times, the territory of *Gorkhārajya* had expanded north to Tibetan lands until it was

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[45] Ibid, 262.

[46] Bikrama Jit Hasrat, ed., *History of Nepal: As Told by Its Own and Contemporary Chroniclers* (Punjab: V.V. Research Institute Book Agency, 1970), 54.

[47] Significantly, the Gurkhali King did this in a time that coincided with the auspicious festival of *Indra jātra*, still today celebrated during the months of August and September. According to the custom, during this festival the child-goddess kumari is taken around the streets of Kathmandu until she finally arrives in front of the Royal Palace, where the King must sit in a throne emplaced next to her. But in this particular occasion it was not the King, but Prithvi Narayan the one who occupied the Royal seat while officially proclaiming himself as the new monarch in front of the superstitious inhabitants. Since then this festival is celebrated in two different ways, as while the *newār* carry on practicing the ancient customs, the *parbatiyā* understand this festivity as the symbolic date when the Kingdom of the Himalaya was finally unified. In Toffin, *Imagination & Realities,* 106.

[48] Nevertheless, it seems that *Gorkhārajya´s* impassable frontier started to be broken only a few years before Prithvi Narayan´s death in 1772, when the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II bestowed in the Gurkhali King the honorific title of *Bahadur-Shamshere Jang.* In Vaidya, *Pritvinarayan Shah,* 205.

Fig. 4: A miniature painting of King Prithvi Narayan Shah. Source: Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2002), 24.

halted by China´s intervention in 1792. It was due to the overwhelming Chinese menace that the Gurkhali started to seek for British alliances, thus Colonel William James Kirkpatrik (1838-1921) was chosen to act as an intermediary between the Nepalese and Chinese. At the same time Kirkpatrik became the first foreigner permitted to enter the Kingdom of the Himalaya, and one of the pioneer writers about the particularities of the Nepalese culture after a long time.

The next step in Anglo-Nepalese developing relations would not be taken until the beginning of the 19th century with the appointment of the first British Resident, Sir William Hunter Douglas Knox, in Kathmandu. Nevertheless, since the hostilities were still active among certain powerful rulers, such as maharani Raj Rajeshwari Devi (died 1806), the commercial agreements could not be achieved and Resident Knox had to leave the country in 1803.

Fig. 5: The *Lalitavistara Sutra* presented y Pandit Amritananda to Captain Knox, 1803. Source: Charles Allen, *The prisioner of Kathmandu. Brian Hodgson in Nepal 1820-43* (Great Britain: Haus Publishing, 2015), 153.

Therefore, in spite of the appearances the British still had a long way to go. Even if Prithvi Narayan´s successors were either too young or uncommitted for the responsibility of ruling the Kingdom, other powerful figures were named as new heads and protectors of the country´s independency on their behalf. It was the case of the first Prime Minister of Nepal Rana Bahadur Shah (1775-1806). Or also the powerful *mukhtiyār* or Prime

Minister, Bhimsen Thapa (1775-1839), who ruled the Kingdom from 1804 on behalf of young King Rajendra Bikram Shah (1813-1881).

Bhimsen was also a patriotic idealist who played a relevant role in the defence of *Gorkhārajya* main interests against the British Empire. Among his historical achievements, Bhimsen tried to expand the *Gorkhārajya* territory towards the eastern Himalayas, currently known as the Darjeeling district, where his ambitious interests clashed with those of the British East Indian Company and the Anglo-Nepal war broke out between 1814 and 1816. Led by the *mukhtiyār´*s powerful command, the Gurkhali warriors defended the area in such a courageous way that would leave a legendary impression amongst the British soldiers over the centuries to come. For such reason, following the signing of the Treaty of Segauli in 1816, the Gurkhali were recruited as soldiers for the British East Indian Company army, while the British Residency was finally established in the capital of Kathmandu.

Fig. 6: General Bhimsen Thapa, 1836. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Art. Issues Miscellany* (Kathmandu: Teba-Chi Studies Centre, 2012), 89.

Thus, partly due to the Gurkhali´s recruitments in foreign lands, but mostly due to the commercial treaty signed in 1834, the first foreign goods started to be imported in the Valley of *Nepāl* as exclusive items to be consumed by the Nepalese elite. But even if Bhimsen Thapa was an assiduous consumer of these exotic living styles coming from "far-away lands", it has to be said that this situation would not reach its most influential peak until the onset of the Rana period[49], which was inaugurated by Jang Bahadur Kunwar (1817-1877) in 1846, after he usurped the royal power of the Shah in the Kot massacre, while adopting for his lineage the honorific title of "Rana"[50].

[49] William.W. Hunter, *Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson* (London: John Murray, 1896), 128.

[50] This term was usually applied to indicate the sovereignty of the Rajput in neighbour India

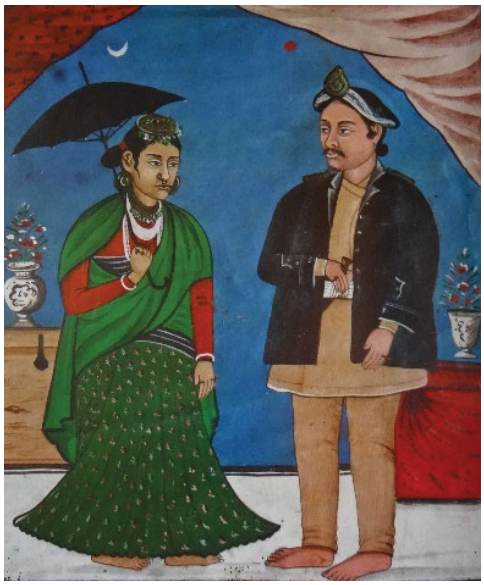

Fig. 7: An army man with his wife, later 18th century. © Collection of Madan Chitrakar. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Painting through the Ages* (Kathmandu: Patan Museum), 254.

Fig. 8: Jang Bahadur Rana and Bada Maharani Hiranyagarbha Kumari, 1870. © Collection of Jeevan SJB Rana. Source: Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2002), 35.

The ambitious Jang Bahadur wanted the independent country of Nepal to have a direct relation with the court in London and other European rulers. Therefore, shortly after seizing Kathmandu, he made a symbolic trip to both England and France, being historically renowned as one of the first Asian maharajas daring to cross the black sea and stepping into European lands.

Jang Bahadur´s faithful attitude to the British Crown was made obvious when during the Indian Mutiny of 1857, when he decided to assist the British by sending elements of his own army to fight in their side. It was after such dramatic event when the British East Indian Company was abolished by Queen Victoria, who took direct control of the Indian Empire under the Crown. Moreover, as a way of thanks Nepal´s inestimable aid, the British Goberment restored some of the lands lost after the Anglo-Nepalese war, due to which Nepal´s political map became as shown in fig. 9.

Since that moment, and for the next hundred years of Rana government in Nepal, the Prime Ministers kept on maintaining a cordial and close relationship with the British elites in India, often inviting them for the popular practice of tiger hunting in the jungles of Tarai. But at the same time never forgetting to safeguard the country´s character of isolation so as to protect it against foreign intervention. For this reason, the Nepalese common dwellers barely had any contact with the foreigners, until the fall of the Rana

regime after the first people´s movement or *Jana Andolan,* which led to the official onset of the country´s international relations over the 1950s.

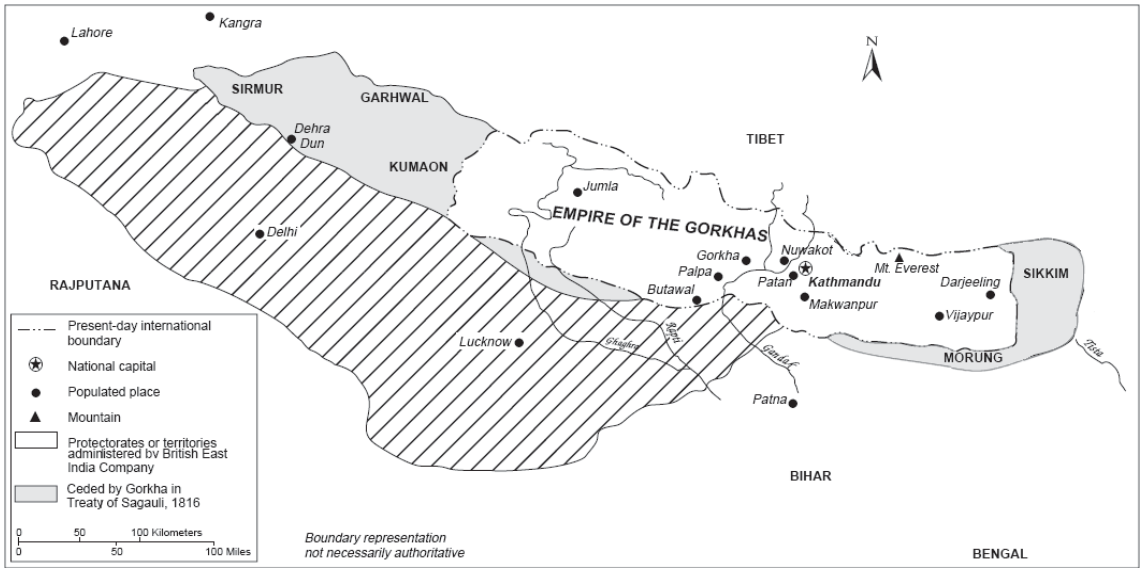

Fig. 9: Greater Nepal Map, Extent of the Gorkha Empire at its height. Source: Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia, accessed August 20, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Nepal

It should be noted that both the Indian and Nepalese revolts were organised with the common purpose of implementing a pro-democratic political system in the countries. But in the case of Nepal´s traditional mind-set, the country´s main control was put in the hands of King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah (1906-1955) believed to be a reincarnation of Vishnu. The idea of the King as a divine being was initially implemented since Prithvi Narayan´s took over in the 18th century as, embracing the traditional Hindu concept of kingship, he regarded himself as one of Vishnu´s avatars[51]. Since then, the modern monarchs of Nepal were crowned according to Vedic rituals associated with tantric empowering status, through which the figure of the King would be established as an illuminated sadhu, associated with the Sakta sect[52]. As a consequence of this, in spite of the fall of the Rana regime and the onset of a more liberalised era in the Kingdom, a proper democracy could not be implemented as it did not match with the traditional environment of Nepal in those times.

[51] John Whelpton, *Jan Bahadur in Europe. The First Nepalese Mission to the West* (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press, 1983), 72.
[52] Gerard Toffin, *From Monarchy to Republic. Essays on Changing Nepal* (Kathmandu: Vajra Books, 2013), 59.

A significant step towards a more democratic system was given when Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala (1914-1982), leader of the Nepali Congress Party, was successfully chosen as the new Prime Minister of Nepal after the 1959 political elections. Nevertheless Koirala´s rule would not last long, as a few months later King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah (1920-1972), crowned in 1956, used his power for the imprisonment of the President and his allies, outloring the Nepali Congress and banning all political parties.

Fig. 10: King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah of Nepal, 1951. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2017.

Thereby, King Mahendra started to pave the way for the establishment of the Panchayat system as a new form of "Nepalese democracy" particularly centred on the Royal House´s leadership, according to the tradition[53]. For thirty years both King Mahendra and his son Birendra Bir Bikram Shah (1945-2001), who was crowned King in February 1975, would gobern Nepal according to the Panchayat open-closed ideals, until it came to an end following the second Jana Andolan in 1990[54].

But due to the internal differences and social inequalities, extreme idealisms in favour of the Communist Party increased in rural areas, reaching its peak in 1996, and leading to the outbreak of a civil war that lasted for ten years. It was in 2001, at the midpoint of the Maoist revolt, when King Birendra and his family were mysteriously assassinated, causing great commotion among the Nepalese population of Kathmandu. Initially his brother Gyanendra was crowned King, and reestablished a political system very similar to the previous Panchayat. However, the unsustainable situation of the war forced him to resign from his post and reinstall the Parliament. Finally, in 2006 Nepal was finally declared a Federal Republic and a secular state, leading to the environment that characterise the scenario of post-modern art in current times.

[53] L.S. Baral, *Autocratic Monarchy. Politics in Panchayat Nepal*. Ed. Pratyoush Onta and Lokranjan Parajuli (Kathmandu: Martin Chautari, 2012), 61-134.

[54] In Mahendra´s words: "Nepal does not want to side with one or the other power block. She will not tolerate any outside interference in her internal affairs as well as in her efforts towards the progress of the country and the society. At the same time she is desirous of having friendship with all nations". In Bishwa Pradhan, *Foreign Policy and Diplomacy* (Delhi, 1964), 6.

1.2. The question of belonging: From the "Nepaliness" to the "Nepalipann"

The present work visualises the nation of Nepal as a huge mandala that is divided in two different, but complementary, areas. On one hand the outer Nepal, referring to the Kingdom of the Himalaya or *Gorkhārajya*, and on the other the inner *Nepāl*, corresponding to Kathmandu Valley´s cultural area. It is the country´s diverse implications of its double, outer and inner, sense, what lead us to the question of identity with regard the Nepalese-Gurkhali and the Nepalese-*newār* ideas[55].

To begin with, the idea of being Nepalese, or belonging to Nepal, is comprised in two distinc ways of understanding: The "Nepalipann", according to the country´s multicultural reality, and "Nepaliness", as a way to refer to Nepal as culturally unified country. Such issue can be analysed by following Bhabha´s differentiation between "cultural diversity" and "cultural difference"[56]. In this sense, while the "Nepalipann" acknowledges the "cultural diversity" as a way to recognise the wide range of traditional customs and multiculturalism within Nepal, the "Nepaliness" refers to this country as a unique "cultural difference", focusing on the Kathmandu Valley´s arts and crafts and the mountain scenery as a symbol of the nation as a whole[57].

In the same way, in regard to the double aspect of Nepal as *Gorkhārajya* or *Nepāl*, referring to ancient Kathmandu, Tapasya Thapa points out to the terms "being", "becoming" and "belonging" as the three factors that constitute the reality of the Indo-Nepalese multi-dimensional identities. According to him, while the idea of "being" points to the sense of "existing in a space and time", the question of "becoming" emphasises the events that occurs around an individual as "being" and the discontinuity of its identity parameters. Consequently, both the ideas of "being" and "becoming", constitute the basis of the most relevant idea of "belonging", and the need to refer to the Nepalese from *Gorkhārajya* as "*belongers* to Nepal"[58]. Accordingly, the present work organises the double meaning of being Nepalese as follows:

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[55] This is considered a relevant issue to be clarified, due to the repercussions that such "double identity" would have in the development of modern art during the Panchayat regime.

[56] Hommy. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[57] C. K. Lal, *To be a Nepalese...* (Kathmandu: Martin Chautari, 2012), 39.

[58] Tapasya Thapa, "Being and Belonging: A Study of the Indian Nepalis," in *Indian Nepalis. Issues and Perspectives*, ed. A.C. Sinha, D.R. Nepal, G.S. Nepal and T.B. Subba. (New Delhi: Concept Company, 2009), 96-97.

Place	Ethnicity	Language	Culture
Nepal *Gorkhārajya*	Gurkhali Nepalese-Gurkhali	Nepali	"Nepalipann"
Nepāl Kathmandu Valley	*newār* Nepalese-*newār*	Newari	"Nepaliness"

As it has been said, the question of the Nepalese identity is particularly important in relation to the development of modern art during the Panchayat period, as a way of building the national unification by emphasising the sense of "Nepaliness" among the different areas of the Himalayan mountain range. In order to do this, both literary and visual arts would play a relevant role. On the one hand, the development of Nepalese literary arts was particularly relevant in the national fight pursued by the Himalayan peoples exiled in Darjeeling. But on the other, the development of visual arts was mainly concentrated in *Nepāl*, or the Kathmandu Valley, and the traditional aesthetics of the *newār*, which were chosen to represent the country´s cultural background towards the international world.

Taking into account the issue of "being Nepalese" applied to the wider area of *Gorkhārajya*, Mary Des Chene highlights the influence of Nepal as a nation-state, raised as a consequence of the need to define the Kingdom of the Himalaya as "unique, independent and brave", and particularly different from colonial India[59]. In a similar way, also Tapasya Thapa significantly points out the historical land of *Gorkhārajya* and the sense of being Nepalese-Gurkhali, as something connected with the nostalgia for Greater Nepal as an independent country[60]. It is in this regard how this work addresses the Nepalese identity according to those artists who, even if having been born in the Darjeeling´s hills, were chosen by King Mahendra to work in Kathmandu in representation of the modern nation of Nepal, regardless its political frontiers.

[59] Mary Des Chene, "Is Nepal in South Asia? The Condition of Non-Postcoloniality," *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 12 (2007): 215.
[60] Thapa, "Being and Belonging," 96-97.

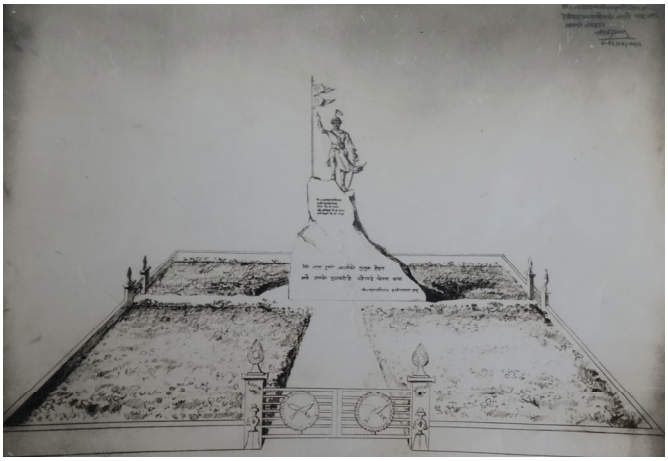

Fig. 11: Amar Chitrakar´s sketch of King Prithvi Narayan Shah´s statue, c. 1960. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2017.

The Himalaya´s unified identity was particularly established after the conquest by Prithvi Narayan Shah, whose figure is symbolically represented raising his index finger as a reference to Nepal as "one country" and "one culture". Additionally, Prithvi Narayan referred to his taken lands as the *Alsi Hindostan*, or "real land of Hindus", as a way to indicate the nation-state of *Gorkhārajya* as completely independent from both British and Mughal India. Due to this most of the ethnic groups of Nepal suffered a process of "Sanskritisation". But, as it was noticed by the Missionary Ludwig Stiller in the 18th century, the country´s multicultural essence was never completely abolished as the different communities were also allowed to maintain their own traditions at the same time[61].

One of the most relevant facts for *Gorkhārajya* cultural unification was the implementation of the Nepali language as the national mean of communication[62]. Michael Hutt declares how the establishment of the Nepali language played a crucial role in the country´s cultural exchange, as it encouraged integration and interaction among the people. According to him, it is in this sense how the present political boundaries of Nepal do not demarcate the region where the Nepalese population lives, as their national identity

[61]. Raj, A. Prakash, *Crisis of Identity in Nepal*, Varanasi 2007, 28.

[62] With regard the origins of Nepali, Prithvi Narayan Shah traced his royal descendants in both the Rajput of western India and the Kasha Kings from the hills, who seems to have spoken an archaic form of Nepali. Accordingly, it could be said that Nepali language was a hybrid result of the Gorkhali language mixed up with the many other languages which comprised the conquered area of *Gorkhārajya*. However, the origins of the Gurkhali tribe cannot be confirmed yet.

is attached not to such boundaries, but to the creation of a common language for their inter-cultural communication[63].

In a similar way, during the Panchayat period, the feeling of belonging to Nepal according to the use of the Nepali language was further enhanced and developed. Following the Panchayat´s slogan *ek bhasha, ek bhesh, ek desh*, translated as "one language, one dress, one country", the National Educational Planning Commission Report of 1956 established Nepali as the teaching language at the public schools, regardless the minor dialects still alive in the diverse areas of the Himalayan mountain range[64].

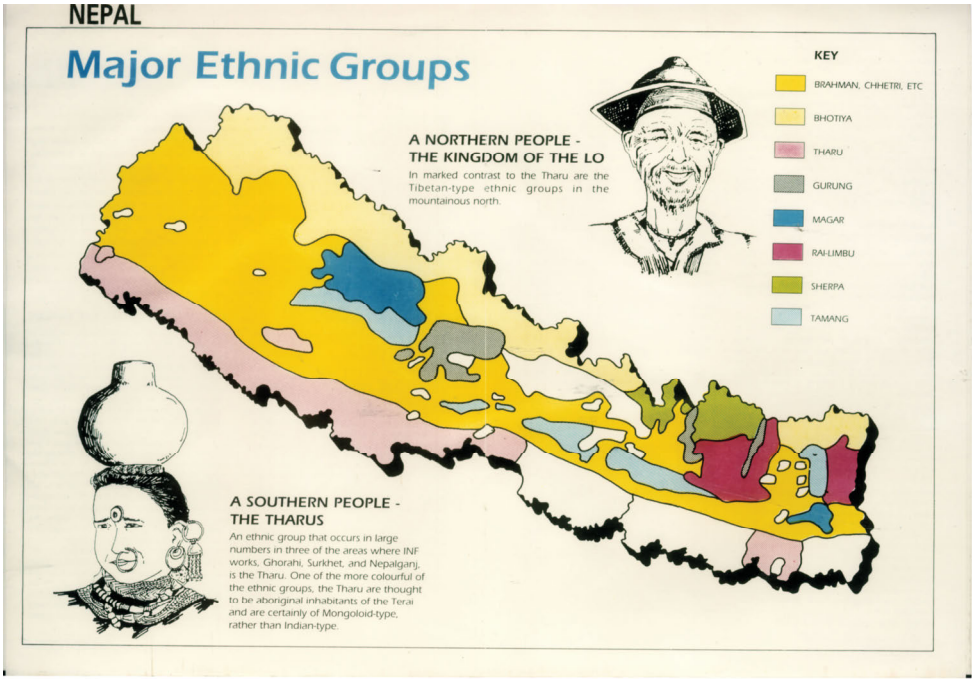

Fig. 12: Nepal. Major Ethnic Groups. Source: Nepal, accessed January 15, 2016, http://www.south-asians.net/nepal.htm

It would be only after the revolution of 1990 and the fall of the Panchayat regime when the question of the "Nepalipann", or the Himalaya´s multicultural essence, was finally raised up by the ethnicities coming from diverse backgrounds, rather than Kathmandu[65]. As Gellner significantly states, "If the period of 1960 to 1990 was one of

[63] Michael Hutt, *Nepal. A Guide to the Art and Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley* (Scotland: Kiscadale Publications, 1997), 101-116.

[64] David Gellner, "The Idea of Nepal" (paper presented at The Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture, Social Science Baha, December 11, 2016), 19.

[65] Due to the violent multicultural upsurge, the statue of Prithvi Narayan Shah outside the palace of Singha Durbar has been broken more than once, and many other of his images polemically removed. Ibid., 109.

nation building, the seventeen years since then has been a time of ethnicity-building"[66]. With this respect Joanna Paff-Czarnecka proposes that the Nepalese national integration can be divided in the following stages:

a) The first stage, the "empire model" in the early Shah and Rana periods, during which the people of Nepal were unified around the rulers in a hierarchical way.
b) Secondly, since the 1930s and the recognition of Nepal as a whole country, the "national model" arose and developed through the Panchayat period, which hybridised the national ideas based on culture and tradition with the new theories of development and modernisation.
c) And thirdly, the "minorities model" corresponds to the post-Panchayat period and the claim for the recognition of Nepal´s cultural diversity, according to the 1991 constitutional frame[67].

On the other hand, the idea of belonging to *Nepāl*, or Kathmandu Valley, must also be considered particularly relevant with regard to the context of visual arts. Since the fact that the Nepalese art and culture was for a long time focused concretely in the traditional creativity of the *newār* as caste of artist, believed to be the original inhabitants of the Valley since ancient times. However, it has to be said that the question of the origins of the *newār* are still a subject of discussion among the experts in the field. In this regard, Gellner points out that the name *newār* was firstly applied to the members of the dominant Kshatriya groups of Kathmandu in the 7th century[68]. But Singh indicates that this community may be a mixture of different ethnic and cultural groups who were joined under the title as the "original inhabitants of *Nepāl*" after the conquest of Prithvi Narayan Shah[69].

It is believed that at least since the Licchavi times, the *newār* have always organised their social and architectural structure according to a system of caste stratification around the schema of a mandala. Here, while the King´s palace was established in the centre, the

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[66] Ibid., 31.
[67] Johanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, "Vestiges and Visions: cultural change in the process of nation building in Nepal," in *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom. The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal,* 1997, ed. David. N. Gellner et al. (The Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997).
[68] David Gellner and Declan Quigley, eds., *Contested Hierarchies. A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 4.
[69] Also, the name of *Nepāl* time may derivate from "*nepālaa*", coming from "*newāraa*". In Hasrat, *History of Nepal*, 19.

high castes around it and the lower ones have to live in the outskirts of the city[70]. It was not until Jayasthiti Malla´s rule (c.1382-1395), when such system was formally organised by law in four main castes: The Brahman as priests, the Kshatriya as warriors, the Vaisya as merchants, and the Sudra as cultivators and servants. All these at the same time stratified in sixty four sub-castes depending on family occupation, particularly indicated by their surnames as in the following chart.

Varna/Caste	Sub-Caste	Family Surnames or Sub-Groups
I.Brahmin	Upadhyaya Brahman	Rajopadhyaya, Rimal, Sharma, Subedi – *Royal Priests and Family Purohits*
	Tirhute/Maithil Brahman	Misra, Bhatta, Jha – *Temple Priests*
II.Kshatriya	Non-Brahmin Priests -	Joshi, Daiwagya – *Assistant Priests and Astrologers* Karmacharya, Guruwacharya, Acharya – *Tantric temple priests and assistants*
	Chatharia Shrestha -	**Thakur:** Malla, Simha, Dev, Pradhan, Vardhan, Varman, Pradhananga – *Malla royals and nobles*
		Chatharia: Amatya, Bhaju, Dhaubhadel, Hada, Kayastha, Mahapatra, Maske, Mool, Rajbaidya, Rajbanshi, Rajbhandari, Piya, Sainju, etc. – *Malla nobles, courtiers and administrators*
III.Vaisya	Panchtharia Shrestha -	Achaju, Bhadra, Kacchipati, Madhikarmi, Mulmi, Naeju, Nyacchon, Sahu, Shrestha – *Administrators or Merchants and Traders*
	Udas/Uraye -	**Udas/Uraye:** Tuladhar, Kansakar, Bania, Sthapit, Rajkarnikar, etc. - *Merchants and Traders, Craftsmen.*
IV. Clean (Sat) Occupational Castes	Jyapu -	Maharjan, Dangol, Suwal, Shilpakar, Awale, Prajapati, etc.: Farmers and related fields.
	Sayami -	Manandhar, Sayami - Oil pressers
	Kau -	Nakarmi - Blacksmiths
	Nau -	Napit - Barbers and Nail cutters
	Gathu -	Malakar, Mali - Gardeners and flowers specialists
	Pu: -	Chitrakara - Painters and Artists
	Bha -	Karanjit - Funeral Specialists
	Cipa -	Ranjitkar - Dyers of clothes
		Various other small castes
V. Unclean (Asat) Occupational Castes (Sudra)	Kusah	Kapali, Kusule - Musicians and tailors, temple cleaners
	Naye	Khadgi, Shahi - Butchers and milksellers
	Kulu	Kulu - Cobblers and Drummakers
	Chama:Khala	Pode, Dhyola, Pujari - Sweepers, fishermen.

Fig. 13: Nepal (*newār*) caste system. Source: Nepal Federalism Debate, accessed November 27, 2017, https://nepalfederalismdebate.wordpress.com/

Once the Gurkhali conquered the Valley and new foreign communities were established in Kathmandu, the social structure was reorganised according to a more unified *parbatiyā* culture from the hills. In this new system the *newār* were gathered

[70] Gellner and Quigley, *Contested Hierarchies*, 8.

together as the "caste of artists", and emplaced among the lowest social ranks as Sudra[71]. Even if the Gurkhali despised the name of *Nepāl* while openly manifesting their preference for the "peoples of the hills" or *parbatiyā*, as it was noticed by Resident Knox, Prithvi Narayan could not avoid being impressed by the creative skills of the *newār*[72]. Thus, as soon as he conquered the Kathmandu Valley, the Gurkhali King advocated for the capital´s architectural styles as the cultural symbol of the nation-state and means of differentiation from the British and Mughal Empires in neighbour India[73].

However, even if this period represented the establishment of Kathmandu´s theatrical scenario as the Kingdom´s national symbol, it also signified the start of its decadence. As according to Henri Ambrose Oldfield (1822-1871), the Residency surgeon, even if Pritvi Narayan seemed to be deeply appealed by the newar´s outstanding skills as craft-makers, he also attempted to transform these styles "a la mode Gorkha", by painting the ornamental carvings with "paint, gilt, and tinsel. Loosing all their original beauty, and almost compared to those wooden models of Chinese pagodas which are to be found in every London toy-shop" [74].

Fig. 14: Gustave Le Bon, Patan Durbar Square. Source: Gustave Le Bon, *Voyage to Nepal*. Trans. Niloufar Maoven and Cecilia Leslie (Kathmandu: Himal books, 2014), 85.

[71] According to Burghart, this ethnicities where also valued according to three categories: the "wearers of the Sacred Thread", such as the Brahman or priests; the "non-alcohol drinkers", such as the Kshatriya or warriors; and the "alcohol drinkers", such as the *newār*. In Burghart, "Nation-State in Nepal," 116.

[72] Ibid., 111.

[73] Hem Raj Kafle, "Prithvi Narayan Shah and Postcolonial Resistance," *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal 2, no. 1* (2008): 139-140.

[74] Henri Ambrose Oldfield, *Sketches from Nepal* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1974), 105.

2. Art and culture of *Nepāl*. From the inner mandala.

> "As one turns into the chief bazar, it is soon realised that there is only one word to describe the city of Kathmandu, and that is picturesque." Percy Brown, 1912[75].

The first academic studies about ancient *Nepāl* were carried out at the end of the Malla period by Capuchin Missionaries from the province of Picenum, Italy, who resided in Kathmandu until they were expelled by Prithvi Narayan Shah[76]. Among these early researchers, Father Cassiano di Macerata must be highlighted for his work on the Valley's outstanding architecture, evocating picturesque descriptions about its monuments, festivals and religious celebrations as early as 1740. He was followed by Father Constantine di Loro in 1744, about whose work the only thing that remains is its title: *Concise news on some customs, sacrifices and idols in the Kingdom of Nevar or Nepal*, along with a brief abstract of four pages in which he mentions the existence of pioneer illustrations that depicted the Kathmandu Valley´s cultural heritage[77].

These researches represent the point of departure from where a whole range of scientific studies on Nepalese culture, ethnicities, flora and fauna were developed by other foreign visitors who gradually arrived in the Valley of *Nepāl* during the 19th and 20th centuries. Such as it is the renowned case of Brian Houghton Hodgson (1800-1894), who introduced innovative Western techniques and new forms of representation in Nepalese art due to his collaboration with a group of local *citrakār*, the *newār* caste of painters, for his scientific researches.

It´s worth saying that due to the isolated character imposed on the Kingdom since the onset of the Gurkhali period, the few foreigners who were permitted to enter the

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[75] Percy Brown, Picturesque *Nepal* (New Delhi: Today & Tomorrow´s Printers & Publishers, 1912), 62.

[76] Initially these Missionaries were preaching in the Tibetan capital of Lasha, but because of the strong opposition of Buddhist leaders they were forced to leave in 1745, finding a new shelter in the Valley of *Nepāl*. Nevertheless, as Father Giuseppe pointed out, it seems that the Capuchin Missionaries were not the first Europeans to visit Kathmandu Valley. Such hypothesis is backed up by the finding of a long mysterious stone in Kathmandu Durbar Square, possibly built in the early Malla period, and covered with written characters of languages from all around the world, including Latin, French or English. In de Rovato, *Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, 313-314.

[77] In Fulgentius Vannini, *Christian Settlements in Nepal during the Eighteenth Century* (New Delhi: Messrs. Devarsons, 1977), 122.

country of the Gods were also strictly forbidden to go beyond the Kathmandu Valley. Therefore, Hodgson´s initial studies were followed up by other enthusiasts about the wonders of Nepal, such as Henri Ambrose Oldfield, Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) or Percy Brown (1872-1955)[78]. Highlighting the fact that all these pioneer studies were mainly focused in Kathmandu Valley´s area, as a clue to understanding the conceived idea of the Nepalese cultural heritage as something that has been mainly concentrated in the arts done by the ethnicity of the *newār*.

Therefore, while in the previous stage the questions of "what is Nepal" and "what does it mean to be Nepalese" have been addressed as departing points for the establishment of the current scenario, the following chapter consists of an historical introduction to the traditional art and culture of Kathmandu in ancient times, in order to establish the basic characteristics from where modern art would develop since the mid of the 19th century. At the same time, this chapter has been illustrated by some of the reproductions made by these researchers in the Valley or by Hodgson´s *citrakār* painters, in order to further emphasise the importance of their work in times of reconstructing the traditional aspects of Nepal around the Kathmandu Valley, and the consequent development the "Nepaliness" idea during the Panchayat times.

Year	**Dynasty**
c.330-880	Licchavi period
c.880-1200	Transitional period
c.1200-1482	Early Malla period
c.1482-1769	Late Malla period

[78] In the case of Oldfield, he was the only one permitted to make journeys outside the Kathmandu Valley up to the Tibetan border during the Rana times.

2.1. Divine Kings of *Nepāl* through chronicles and legends.

In order to speak about the history of Kathmandu, or ancient *Nepāl*, one has to take into account, on the one hand, the ancient inscriptions and chronicles which provide us with written information about the Valley´s ancient Kings and, on the other, its mythical aspects developed through local legends and fairy tales.

For instance, in a similar way to the tantric theory of creation, according to which the Universe was born from a vast infinite ocean named Brahman, the *Swayambhu purāṇa* recounts how Kathmandu Valley used to be an enormous lake inhabited by the Naga. One day a sacred flame emerged on the middle of the lake, symbolising the Buddha manifested in himself. In order to open the access to this flame, the bodhisattva *Mañjuśrī* cut apart the mountains with his magical sword, empting the lake and making the Valley habitable for human beings. In this way *Mañjuśrī* was established as the founder of *Nepāl*, whose name seems to have developed from the original name of "Manju Pattan", being the sacred flame protected under the *stūpa* of *Swayambhunāth*[79].

Fig. 15: Raj Man Singh Chitrakar. *Swayambhunāth*, c. 1820. Source: Raj Man Singh Chitrakar – Artist to Mr. Hodgson, accessed October 9, 2017, https://allevents.in/kathmandu/raj-man-singh-chitrakar-artist-to-mr-hodgson

As it has been said, it is thanks to the ancient inscriptions how an approximated chronology on the dynasties and rulers of Kathmandu can be reconstructed, as well as the cultural exchanges of the Valley with India, Tibet and the Chinese Empire. Broadly

[79] Brown, Picturesque *Nepal*, 66.

speaking, Mary Slusser classifies these inscriptions into coins, pillars, sculptures or paintings, the later known as *śilpa śāstra*. But also copperplates or documents, either written on palm leaves or hand-made paper.

With regard the written sources, we have the traveller´s letters and testimonies, the religious texts or Purana, the chronicles or *vaṃśāvalī*, and the journals or *thyāsapu*[80]. Among them, the *vaṃśāvalīs* are considered as basic and important sources, as they offer us a wide genealogy of the different dynasties of *Nepāl*, written either in Nepali or Newari languages. Dated between the 18th and 19th centuries, the most ancient *vaṃśāvalī*, the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*, was made back in the 14th century, during Sthiti Malla´s time (1382-1395).

It is this document what tells us about the existence of indigenous tribes such as the the *gopāla* (cow-herds), believed to have been first inhabitants of the fertile land of *Nepāl* during the Hindus Valley times (3300-1300 BC)[81]. Apparently, the *gopāla´*s seat of government was Mathatirtha, believed to have been located in the southern area of Kirtipur[82]. It is likely that the *gopāla* were tantric practitioners, worshippers of Shiva and the powers of Mother Nature[83].

After the *gopāla*, the following dynasty described by these chronicles and tales are the *kirāta*, who ruled in *Nepāl* during the Maurya Empire (320-185 BC). Even if their origins are uncertain, it is believed that these rulers were descendants of the inhabitants of the Hindus Valley, who escaped to the mountains after the Arian invasions. According to the ancient legend of the Mahabharata when Arjun, one of the Pandav brothers, travelled into the mountains in penitence he met with "the people of the periphery", possibly the *kirāta*, who were governed by "Shiva manifested in the form of a King"[84].

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[80] Mary Slusser is an art historian who researched in Nepal between the years 1965-1971.

[81] Amita Ray, *The Art of Nepal* (New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1973), 2.

[82] According to the *Paśupati* Purana, the name "*Nepāl*" was set during this period on behalf of Saint Ne, a Hindu sage protector of the Valley whose name combined with "*pala*" results in "*Nepāla*", which means "the country looked after by Ne".

[83] According to the legends surrounding the *chaturmukha liṅga* of *Paśupatināth*, this sacred symbol was found by a "holy cow", somehow pointing out the presence of the *gopāla* in those times. It is a strange coincidence that the inhabitants of the Hindus Valley, at the feet of the Himalaya, are also believed to have been tantric worshippers of *Paśupati*, "Lord of Beasts", as seems to be indicated in those seals where the Lord is depicted seated in asana or tantric meditative posture with a phallus, or *liṅga*, erected between his legs.

[84] Sudarshan Raj Tiwari, *The Brick and The Bull: An account of Handigaum, the ancient capital of Nepal* (Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2002), 21.

Since the arrival of the Arians in the Hindus Valley and the establishment of the Vedic period (1500-600 AD), the ancient tantric worship to Shiva and Mother Nature was replaced for masculine forces such as Agni the God of fire, Indra the God of rain or *Surya* the God of sun. Such beliefs will diverge in the upsurge of the Brahmanic period (600-325 AD), and Brahman established as the main source of creation. Following these, the tantric ascetic practices would be popularised as the path to attain illumination and liberation from the wheel of samsara, source from where Buddhism, and later Hinduism, would arise[85]. But it would not be until the times of the Maurya Empire when the Buddhist faith would be established as the main dharma in northern India, and also in *Nepāl*, as it seems to be indicated by the Ashoka´s Stambha built in the sacred complex of Lumbini, or the so-called *Aśoka stūpa*s of Laliptur, which was the *kirāta* ruler´s establishment in ancient times[86].

Fig. 16: Sri Lakshmi, 2nd century. Handigaoun. Source: Lain Singh Bangdel, *The Early Sculptures of Nepal* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1982), 100.

However, since the existence of the *gopāla* and *kirāta* dynasties is mainly based on legends and fairy tales, *Nepāl´*s cultural history cannot be officially established until the Licchavi period (300-879), whose history is mainly written on the sacred *śilpa śāstras,* or stone edicts, that are daily worshipped by the Nepalese people with red powder as divine beings[87]. The Licchavi are believed to have been descendants of Vaishali, or ancient Pataliputra in north India. Apparently, in the 2nd century BC these people emigrated up to the fertile Valley of Kathmandu after the Kushana invasions, and for more than five centuries developed the aesthetics of the Kathmandu Valley towards its current shape.

While at the beginning of their rule the Licchavis were Buddhists and worshipers of Mother Nature, as it seems to be indicated in those early sculptures representative of goddesses seated on thrones while exhibiting their genital parts, in later times the

[85] Precisely, Buddha was a powerful prince named Siddhartha who ruled in Lumbini, located in south Nepal, who renounced to all his goods and wealth so as to find illumination through what he called the "middle-path".

[86] Additionally, it is believed that *Aśoka*'s daughter, Charumati, married the Nepali prince Devapala, founding the Chabahil viharas in Deo Patan, near *Paśupatināth*. In Lydia Aran, *The Art of Nepal. A Guide to the Masterpieces of Sculpture, Painting and Woodcarving* (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan, 1978), 64.

[87] Mary. S. Slusser, *Nepal Mandala. A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 20.

Licchavi´s sculptural aesthetics would suffer a process of development and change, especially after the influence of Mahayana Buddhism brought in from north India. On the contrary to the previous Theravada Buddhist faith in which the Master was symbolically represented by the void, the Mahayana Buddhism created the Buddha´s and bodhisattvas´anthropomorphic images, in order to export this dharma to foreign countries. For such reason, the Schools of Mathura and *Gandhāra* were inaugurated, each of them producing a different interpretation of Buddha´s anthropomorphic form[88]. Between both schools, it would be the Mathura´s style, more natural and organic, the one preferred as the ideal prototype for Buddha´s representation in the Kathmandu Valley, as we can see in the following representation of *Surya*.

This sculpture is relevant as due to its royal attires, with garlands and a crown proper of a prince, which led to believe that it is an early portrait of a Licchavi King. This theory is further supported by the fact that the Licchavi rulers proclaimed to be descendants of *Surya*, and even adopting the title of deva, which means "divine", as their honorific surname. Indeed, receiving constant influences from the Gupta Empire, the Licchavi Kings were devoted followers of Vishnu and his multiple avatars. As a way of worshipping this God, the *Changu Nārāyana* temple became an important complex built by the Licchavi King Manadeva in the 4th century. Besides its architectural relevance, as the first pagoda-style temple of Nepal, it is important to highlight the garuda sculpture, today kneeling in front of the main gate of the sanctuary, and whose humanised features and moustache raises suspicions about this particular piece being a portrait of King Manadeva instead.

Fig. 17: Solar Divinity, 4th century. Chhauni National Museum. Source: Lain Singh Bangdel, *The Early Sculptures of Nepal* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1982), 173.

The custom of representing the King´s portrait in place of garuda would continue to be practised over the following Malla dynasty (1200-1769), who ruled in the independent Valley of *Nepāl* during the gradual consolidation of Muslim´s domain in India. But even if this practice seemed to be done for emphasising their ruling power as a reincarnation of *Virūḍha*, one of Vishnu´s avatars, Toffin indicates that there is nothing that clearly demonstrates that the Kings of ancient *Nepāl* had been worshipped as Gods

[88] Sudharshan Raj Tiwari, *Temples of the Nepal Valley*. (Lalitpur: Himal Books, 2009).

themselves. Even if there are numerous references to the divine condition of the ancient Kings of *Nepāl,* "such as *Giriraja* (lord of the mountains) *Chakrachudani* (crest-jewel of the wheel) or *Nara-Nārāyana* (god among men)"[89].

Fig. 18: Henry Ambrose Oldfield, *Changu Nārāyana*, Bathgaon, c. 1855. Watercolour. Source: The Sampradaya Sun. Nepal in the Mahabharata Period, Part 28, accessed October 12, 2017, http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/features/03-13/features2755.htm

However, it seems that already in ancient times the rulers of *Nepāl* would understand the power of art as a visual way to emphasise their divine condition towards the people´s eyes, leading the reconstruction of Nepal´s traditional art around their own figures as the central point of *Nepāl*-mandala.

The particular performativity laying in the use of art as a tool for self-divinisation is specially enhanced through the traditional worship of human beings, such as is the case of the incarnated child-goddess kumari[90]. Worshipped by both Buddhist and Hindus, the kumari has to reside in the kumari baha for the whole year, allowed to go out only during the kumari *jātra* festival. Established by King Jaya

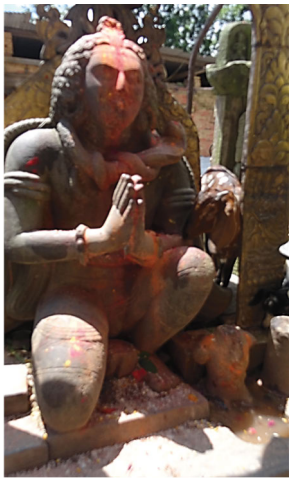

Fig. 19: Image of garuda, or portrait of King Manadeva, c. 4th century. Stone sculpture. *Changu Nārāyana* complex. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

[89] Toffin, *From Monarchy to Republic*, 59.

[90] According to the legend, once a Malla King was playing dice with *Taleju* when he tried to abuse her. Offended, *Taleju* cursed the King and promised that from that moment onwards, she would only present herself as a virgin girl, so that the King could not offend her again.

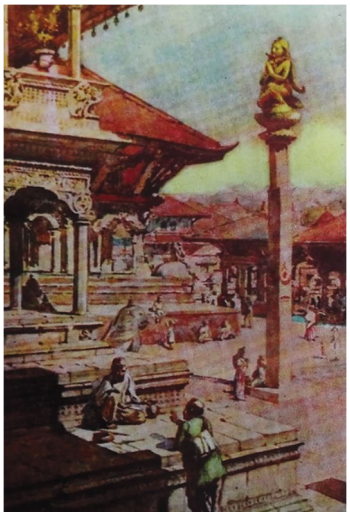

Fig. 20: King Yoganendra. Source: Percy Brown, *Picturesque Nepal* (New Delhi: Today & Tomorrow´s Printers & Publishers, 1912), 1.

Prakash Malla in 1757, during this event the child-goddess is taken around Kathmandu on her special chariot, while large amounts of Nepalese people approach the Goddess to receive her blessings. Therefore, this work highlights the festivals of Nepal as relevant events regarding the performative aspects given in the cultural scenario of Kathmandu, understood as a huge theatrical stage[91].

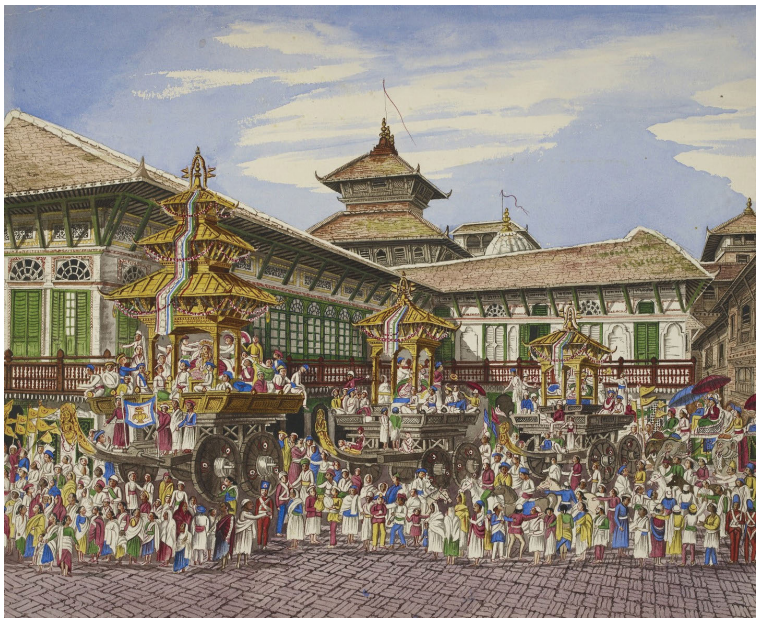

Fig. 21: Henry Ambrose Oldfield, The kumari *jātra*, c. 1855. Watercolour. Source: The Sampradaya Sun. Nepal in the Mahabharata Period, Part 28, accessed October 12, 2017, http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/features/03-13/features2755.htm

[91] Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, 38.

2.2. Naturally hybrid: Traditional aesthetics of *Nepāl* among the mountains.

> "Within the confinements of the Valley there is concentrated a world of varied interest, tradition, and beauty as may be found nowhere even among the history-coloured and majestic towns and ruins of India. The continuity of life and faith has suffered from no religious intolerance for, strange though it may seem, Buddhism and Hinduism have here met and kissed each other. In some ways, Kathmandu remains today much as it was in the 7th century." Perceval Landon, 1928[92].

In the previous chapter, the performative aspects intrinsic in the ancient art and culture of Nepal, based upon legends and fairy tales, and the deliberate use of art as a tool for legitimising the King´s rule in the different dynastic times have been highlighted. Also the hybrid aspect of Nepalese art, as a consequence of its developing process in a zone of contact between northern and southern cultures, has to be added as a third characteristic of the ancient art in Kathmandu Valley.

While in the previous stages the historical cohesion of Nepal with ancient India has been constantly underlined, the Tibeto-Nepalese cultural exchange would not start until the times of King Amsuvarman (595-621), founder of the Thakuri period as the transitional era between the Licchavi and Malla dynasties (879-1200). Amsuvarman would firmly establish Nepal´s political relations with the Tibetan Empire, after the marriage of his own daughter, princess Brikuti, with the powerful Emperor Songtsen Gyampoo (605-650), who adopted the Buddhist faith as a method of pacifying and unifying his vast territory.

Due to the demand for Buddhist images for the Tibetan temples and shrines, the *newār* artists started to produce their sculptures in bronze, as a way of creating lighter pieces which could be transported through the high mountain passes. At the same time, Tibetan influences would also arrive in the Valley of Kathmandu, and the Nepalese sculptures startd to be hybridised with characteristically Tibetan features, as well as their ritualistic paintings with Chinese-style landscapes as new backgrounds.

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[92] Pratapaditya Pal, *Art of Nepal: a catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum Art Collection* (California: Los Angeles County Museum, 1985), 14-16.

Fig. 22: Buddhist Deity *Avalokiteshvara Shrithikantha*, c. 1800. Source: Pinterest, accessed August 18, 2016, https://www.pinterest.es/pin/335518240968284596/?autologin=true

On the other hand, Tibetan Buddhism emerged as a hybrid between the local animist faith, or bon, and the tantric theories preached by Indian sadhus, who were crossing the Himalaya in an attempt to avoid Muslim invasions. Among them, Padmasambhava, or Guru Rimpoche, must be highlighted as one of the creators of the Vajrayana Buddhist faith around the 8th century. According to the legends, before heading up towards Tibetan lands, Padmasambhava remained for four long years in a Nepalese *baha*, or Vajrayana vihara, during which he built the *stūpa* of *Boudhanath*. Significantly, as a commemorative monument of Buddha´s nirvana, we can see how this *stūpa* was built according to the Vajrayana concepts: with four open niches looking at the four cardinal points, and the *harmikā* symbolising *Meru*, the "Cosmic Mountain", as the last stage of illumination[93].

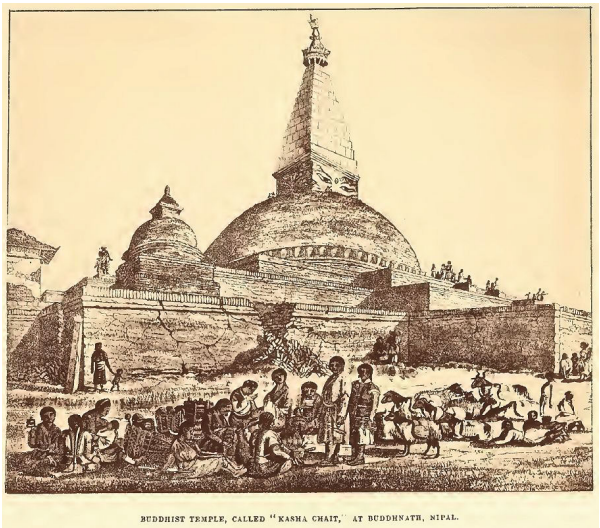

Fig. 23: Henry Ambrose Oldfield, Buddhist Temple *Kasha Chait* at *Boudhanath*, 1880. Source: Henry Ambrose Oldfield (1822-1871), accessed January 17, 2018, http://www.bilder-aus-nepal.de/Pages/Literatur/Oldfield/Oldfield_Vol2-P260.html

[93] Hutt, *Nepal*, 54-59.

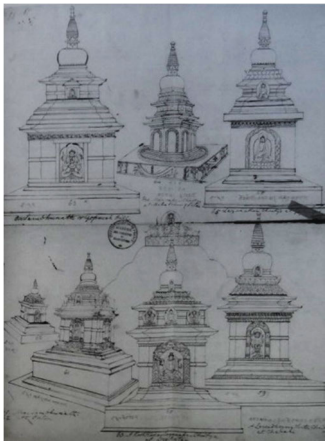

Fig. 24: Hodgson´s figures 59-65. British Library. Source: William W. Hunter, Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson (London: John Murray, 1896), 129.

Indeed, in spite of its aesthetical forms essentially hybrid, a fourth characteristic of the art of Nepal would be its inspiration by the mountain scenery surrounding the Kathmandu Valley. In this sense, the Nepalese *caitya* is also presented as a memorial that commemorate either Buddha´s death, or the passing away of a member belonging to a powerful *newār* family, as a derivation of the *stūpa* but in smaller size[94]. These *caityas* are spread in thousands all around Kathmandu Valley, following the Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana styles.

Same as in the case of the *stūpa* of Boudhanath, the *śikharakuta caitya*, dated of the Malla period, is inspired in a *śikhara* or "Mountain peak". In later stages, during the Rana modern period, this *śikharakuta caitya* would develop towards the bigger *Sumeru caitya*, alluding to the Cosmic Mount *Sumeru* in a similar way. There are also the stone-carved temple or *śikhara*, for instance the Krishna temple, located in Patan Durbar square and ornamented with beautiful carvings depicting the Mahabharata and Ramayana tales[95]. But among all the different temple styles decorating the Kathmandu Valley, the most iconic one with regard the mountain imagery is the pagoda-style temple, whose multiple roof structure reminds us of the exact shape of a mountain peak[96].

Fig. 25: Temple of *Kumbheswara* in Patan. RAS, Hodgson Collection. Source: William W. Hunter, Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson (London: John Murray, 1896), 100.

Many of the first pagoda temples built in the Valley were initially conceived as dharmsala, or open pavilions where pilgrims could rest of their long walks towards the Himalaya. This is the case of the famous Kathsamandap

[94] J. P. Losty, "The architectural monuments of Buddhism," in *The Origins of Himalayan Studies: Brian Houghton Hodgson in Nepal and Darjeeling*, ed. David. M. Waterhouse, (Royal Asiatic Society Books: Routledge, 2004), 113.

[95] Hutt, *Nepal*, 53-54.

[96] But even if these structures are broadly named "pagodas" for their similar characteristics to the Chinese architecture, Tiwari suggests to name them instead as *tallakara*, or "many roofs" temple in Newari, as there is no proof to believe that these tiered structures developed from the Chines ones. In Tiwari, *Temples of the Nepal Valley*, 22-30.

temple, a sacred complex built with the wood of a magical tree donated by the saint *Gorakhnāth*. These dharmsalas would be transformed into pagodas after the introduction of the *vāstu puruṣa* mandala in Nepalese architecture through the Gupta Empire. According to this, the sanctuary was to be located at centre of the base following a square-shaped form, where the sculpture of a divine being would be placed for its worship, in the same way as a holy sadhu would meditate in the Himalayan mountain caves for long periods of time.

Fig. 26: Henri Ambrose Oldfield, The market place in Kathmandu. Source: Henri Ambrose Oldfield, *Sketches from Nepal* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1974), 105.

On the other hand, the tantric cult in the Valley would be officially popularised during the Thakuri period, coinciding with the post-Gupta times in India (600-750). As a result of the violent wars generated after the Hune invasions, the different Kings of India felt attracted to the ancient cults of Tantra as a way to empower themselves against their enemies. Consequently, the Tantras were written as sacred manuscripts for the dissemination of this practice, up to that time secretly maintained in village areas. Also utilised as tools for practical purposes, the Tantras were guides for the building of temples and the development of art aesthetics. One of the most important manuscripts with this regard was the *tantrāloka*, or the "Light of Tantra", written in the 12th century by Abhinavagupta (950-1020). Which followed a theory established around the concept of rasa, or the different human emotions that a piece of art must evoke through the power of its visual aesthetics.

Due to the diverse interpretations and Schools developed inside the tantric belief, the manuscrips of the Tantras were written in many different ways. In general terms, they used a metaphorical style named the *sandhābhāṣa*, a sort of "mystery language" impossible to understand, unless explained by an experienced tantrika. Nevertheless, thanks to Mr. Arthur Avalon, or John Woodrofe (1865-1936), and his translations of the Tantras during the times of the British Empire, we may approach a slight abstract idea about such a deep and complicated thought.

Accordingly, the question of Tantra may be described as the "awakening path" where the Universe´s original game is represented by the polar energies, Shiva-Sakti, and the endless process of creation and destruction, for everything to be created again. It was following such idea how the divinities of *Nepāl* would start to be transformed in terrifying gods and goddesses, with numerous arms and legs, dancing the dance of death and holding war-like weapons.

Fig. 27: The Goddess *Cāmuṇḍā*, 14th century. Copper with traces of gilt, pigment and semiprecious stones. © Los Angeles County Museum. Source: Pratapaditya Pal, *Art of Nepal: a catalogue of the Los Angeles County Museum Art Collection* (California: Los Angeles County Museum, 1985), 50.

Particularly since the 14th century, when King Rudramalla married Queen Devaladevi from the Kingdom of Mithila, new tantric divinities would be imported. Such as the powerful Goddess *Taleju*, who was chosen as the main deity of the Mallas. It was after Yaksa Malla´s rule (1429-1482) and the division of the Valley in the principalities of Bhadhaon (Bhaktapur), Lalitpur (Patan) and Kathmandu, sacred complexes proliferated around the main Durbars of the Three Kingdoms, which were built to honour the tantric divinities of *Nepāl*, and specially *Taleju*.

Also the powerful Shiva would reappear in the Nepalese iconography, mostly represented in his form of *Umāmaheśvara*, seated with his wife Parbati on the top of Mount *Kailāsh*. Thus, besides its hieratical naturalism inherited from the previous traditional art forms, these tantric compositions would also be characterised for their theatrical environments, including natural elements in their backgrounds, while adding the narrativity as a visual way of communication for the Valley´s illiterate population, as the last aspect to be highlighted in the traditional art of Nepal.

Fig. 28: Manuscript cover with Buddhist Scenes, 12th century. Distemper on cloth. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: THE MET. Online collection. Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, accessed May 30, 2015, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1984.479.1a,b/

Consequently, the historical development of the art of Nepal around Kathmandu Valley´s cultural heritage underlines the following characteristics, which are stablished as a base from where the development of modern art over the last centuries can be properly analysed:

a) The mythical aspects of Nepalese art, whose history is usually explained through legends and fairy tales.

b) The relevance of the King as the main promoter of the country´s creativity and source of inspiration at the centre of *Nepāl*-mandala.

c) The hybrid essence of the Kathmandu Valley´s art, due to its privileged location as a cultural zone of contact between Tibet and India.

d) The aesthetical inspiration on the Himalayan peaks, especially for the creation of the Valley´s temples and sanctuaries.

e) And the narrative and theatrical sense implicit in every form of Nepalese creativity, always highlighting its performative sense.

Part one

"Orientalism"/"Occidentalism": A round trip exoticism.

In order to understand the developing processes of modern art in Nepal, we should start by speaking about the onset of the Oriental idea brought about by the Western´s imaginative mind. Already by the end of the 18th century, Asia´s exoticism had become popularly demanded among Western society. Consequently, when in 1773 Colonel Kirkpatrik tried to publish his journal about his experiences in Nepal, it was rejected as it was "too much realistic and non-literary"[97]. Also, at the beginning of the 20th century the President of the Royal Geographical Society, Sir Francis Younghusband (1863-1942) published his exotic descriptions of the Tibetan landscape, but this time in a romantic way, drawn by the mythicising longing widely claimed by the West. Even if during those times the city of Lhasa was "a filthy city ruled by the Lamas in a theocratic form of government"[98].

It was following the technical developments brought about by the 19th century Industrial Revolution, when the Victorian society started to go through a period of transition towards a new modernised society, based on secular ideals and thoughts. This historical change came along with an identity crisis, in which the West started to question itself about the origins of humanity in scientific terms. Hoping to find the answer to this polemical issue, many travelled to faraway lands around the world, and in particular Asia[99]. This played a significant role in the reconstruction of West´s identity as the

[97] Although it was eventually published in 1811, following possible revisions. In Bishop, *The Sacred Myth of Shangri-La,* 27.
[98] Liechty, *Far Out*, 9.
[99] These people included Csoma de Koros (1784-1842) who in 1825 travelled to Tibet in an attempt to discover the original roots of the Hungarian people, also Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911), a pioneer researcher in the field of botanical studies of the Himalaya, and whose researches were a source of inspiration for Darwin´s revolutionary work *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859. In Peter Bishop, *The Sacred Myth of Shangri-La. Tibet, Travel Writing and Western Creation of Sacred Landscape* (New Delhi: Adarsh Enterprises, 2000), 122.

"rational side" of the world and in contrast to the Oriental idea, defining the geographical images that nowadays divide the East-West cultural frontiers[100].

Liechty highlights the Theosophy as something that cannot be ignored in the process of "Orientalisation" of Asia, and particularly the Himalaya´s mystical imagery as "Western´s contracultural part"[101]. This Society was founded by Madamme Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) and Colonel Henry Olcott (1832-1907) in the middle of the 19th century, as a spiritual organisation based on a mixture of beliefs between oriental mysticism, science and Christianity[102].

Fig. 29: Jang Bahadur Rana in a French newspaper of the time. Source: Jang Bahadur Rana and the Dancing Damsels – The Sojourn in France, accessed September 8, 2016, http://historylessonsnepal.blogspot.com.es/2010/06/Jang-bahadur-rana-and-dancing-damsels.html

The Theosophical Society was inaugurated around the same time of Jang Bahadur Rana´s historical visit to Western lands, just after his conquest of *Nepāl*. Curiously, Liechty comments how Madame Blavatsky wrote that she had a mystical encounter with the maharaja of Nepal on August 12, 1851, who she recognised immediately "as the embodiment of astral spirit whom she had encountered frequently on her childhood". Nevertheless, as the author points out, since Jang Bahadur left London on August 20, 1850, a year before Blavatsky´s vision, it is likely that this was a product of her "fertile imagination"[103].

[100] But even if the Imperial times are to be considered as the peak moment when the exotic views of Asia came into vogue, it has to be said that these imagery was already promoted since the first encounters between both Eastern and Western civilisations. For instance, during Alejandro Magno´s time the Greek Naearco spoke about the existence of a marvellous country located in the Hindus Valley, "where there was a sea of honey and butter, and whose inhabitants were giant ants and levitating men". In Eva Fernández del Campo, *El Arte de India. Historia e historias* (Madrid: Editorial AKAL, 2013), 16.

[101] Ibid., 5.

[102] Apparently, Blavatsky and Olcott claimed to have direct links with "The Masters of the Universe", who's holy residence was located in the Himalaya. In Mark Liechty, "Building the Road to Kathmandu: Notes on the History of Tourism in Nepal," *Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, 25, (2005): 20.

[103] Mark Liechty, *Far Out. Countercultural Seekers and the Tourist Encounter in Nepal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 3-5.

Indeed, Jang Bahadur´s theatrical attitude during his visit in Europe, walking around with great oriental pomp and displays of power, must be highlighted as something that left such a big impression that his legendary halo pervaded in the West´s imaginative minds during the years to come. But while much has been written about "Orientalism" and its implications on the building of the nations all around the world, this work is particularly focused on the question of "Occidentalism", analysing the impact that the arrival of Western exotic trends and thoughts had in the Kathmandu Valley[104].

However, Occidentalism should not be understood as a mere contrary of Orientalism. All the way around, according to Professor Jinhua Dai "Occidentalism" is the way through which Third World cultures create subversive intellectual inquiries in the development of American academia and English level scholarship. In this sense, it could be stated that "Orientalism" engages "Occidentalism", because as the Orient is built as a discursive construct of the "other" and Western´s counterpart, "Occidentalism" takes up such discourse and appropriates it while re-creating a "self-Orientalised" national image as a tool for social cohesion[105].

Besides, this work also highlights how the Occidental idea was also a consequence of the mythification of the West through the East´s exoticising outlook. In this sense, as well as Younghusband "Orientalised" the image of Lhasa with his enchanting descriptions about the country, Jang Bahadur Rana also "Occidentalised" Europe in a similar way. According to Whelpton´s *Belait-Yatra*, a translation of the journal that the maharaja wrote during his trip, the Prime Minister´s imaginative descriptions are evidenced when comparing the British capital with "the place where virtuous men are said to go after death"[106]. He describes it as almost a dream-world where "no mud, dust, excrement or refuse is to be seen", even if only a year before, in November 1849, the Medical Officer of Health in London pointed out the unhealthy dirty environment of the capital´s streets[107].

According to this, the following chapter will analyse such a round trip process of exoticism as a first step towards the development of modern art in the country of Nepal.

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[104] Edward W. Said, *Orientalismo*. Trans. María Luisa Fuentes (Madrid: Debate, 2002).

[105] Jinhua Dai, introduction to *Occidentalism. A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, by Xiaomei Chen, trans. Jonathan Noble (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995).

[106] Whelpton, *Jan Bahadur in Europe*, 4.

[107] Ibid., 167.

Thus, following Des Chene´s suggestion, this process is developed in the following categories or stages:

a) The "fossil" stage, found in the romantic forms of travel writings –and picturesque landscapes.
b) The "interface", where Nepal is depicted as an in-between land among Tibet and India, indicated by the anthropological researches such as the pioneer ones of Brian Houghton Hogdson.
c) And finally, the idea of Nepal as "Shangri-La" and its culmination in the exotisation on the Himalaya, with the country´s art and culture, particularly focused on the representation of the picturesque scenario of the Kathmandu Valley[108].

[108] Des Chene, "Is Nepal in South Asia?" 213.

3. Fantasized landscapes. Introducing the picturesque idea.

> "The big polychrome temples covered with brightly coloured statues and protected by monsters bizarrely shaped, the shining bronze covering the palaces, the marvellous sculptures of the buildings; all give the cities of this ancient empire the most fantastic outlook. If one adds that these peculiarities are surrounded by the giants of the Himalaya, one would then easily admit that solitary Nepal is maybe one of the strangest and probably the most picturesque region of the universe." Gustave Le Bonn[109].

In order to understand the Kingdom of the Himalaya the faculty of imagination should not be undervalued, as every history created along the mountain range has always been constituted on a basis of legends and fairy tales. Likewise, when analysing the onset of modern arts in Nepal, imagination is to be considered as part of such a round trip process of exoticisation, during which while Nepal is "Orientalised" by the West, the West is "Occidentalised" by Nepal. Which concludes with the local appropriation of the Western´s Oriental imagery as a form of invention of the national identity, and its representation for the international world. As part of such round trip exoticising dialogue, the communicating aspects of visual arts must be highlighted as a fundamental tool for the enhancement of the myth of Nepal.

Such process started already by the end of the Anglo-Nepalese War in 1816, when due to the Treaty of Segauly, the first British hill stations were established along the mountains, while the first foreign researchers and anthropologists arrived to study the mysterious wonders of this rich and unknown area of the world[110]. Accordingly, the following chapter has been particularly focused on such process of "Orientalisation" and its consequences in the first conformation of the creative scene of modern art in Nepal.

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[109] Gustave Le Bon, *Voyage to Nepal*. Trans. Niloufar Maoven and Cecilia Leslie (Kathmandu: Himal books, 2014), 93.

[110] Burghart, "The Formation of the Concept of Nation-State," 101.

3.1. Himalayan mists, mystical art. A picturesque outlook to the mountain range.

> "Watching clouds float beneath these transcendent and eternal hills, and to follow the shadows they cast upon their lustrous surface, sparkling and shimmering in the noontide sun; yet still more beautiful is to watch them at eventide, when at the sun´s quiet hour of rest shadows lengthen and the orb of day, sinking behind the rugged peaks, sends upwards a flood of Golden light, bathing them in hues of amethyst and rose – then they are almost unearthly in their splendour." Nina Mazuchelli, 1876[111].

During the first Western approaches to the Himalayan mountain range, the picturesque idea of painting was of foremost importance in a time when the photographic technique was still in a developing process. This idea has its origins in the events of the 18th century, as this period represented the birth of a new critical thought based on the theory of empiricism, in which the faculty of knowledge comes fundamentally from the sensorial experience. It was in such way how the romantic-style of landscape painting started to be highly appreciated by British society, particularly as a result of the Grand Tour, performed by rich and aristocratic British families.

During this Tour the idea of the picturesque appeared in English language as a way to define the chromatic effects, luminous changes, and narrativity of outstanding Venetian paintings[112]. However, it would not be until the late 18th century when the description of the picturesque would be officially established as a separate characteristic, but never completely distinguished, from the beautiful and the sublime aspects of mountain scenery or natural landscape. According to William Gilpin (1724-1804), principal promoters of the picturesque idea, as well was beauty means smoothness, the picturesque means roughness, or "the beauty of the irregularity"[113].

In other words, the picturesque was conceived as poetic translation of the visual world, recreated on an imaginative basis, and adopted as the best tool through which a foreign landscape or architectural scenario could be reflected, according to the artist´s

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[111] Nina Mazuchelli, *The Indian Alps and How We Crossed Them. By A Lady Pioneer* (London: Longmans Green and Co, 1876), 57.
[112] Javier Maderuelo, "La mirada pictoresca," *Quintana. Revista de Estudos do Departamento de Historia da Arte*, no. 11 (2012): 79-90.
[113] Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 26.

own interpretation. In Berger´s words, "the visible world was arranged (by the artist), as the universe was once thought to be arranged by God"[114]. Thus, since the mid of the 19th century this imaginative approach for the representation of foreign landscapes would be a convenient way of illustrating the visual translation of the Kingdom of Nepal.

Fig. 30: Nina Mazuchelli, c. 1876. Drawing. Source: Nina Mazuchelli, *The Indian Alps and How We Crossed Them. By A Lady Pioneer* (London: Longmans Green and Co, 1876), 57.

Nevertheless, in this case the picturesque approach would be applied in a slow but progressive path. In initial stage, its colossal panorama would be categorised as "non-picturesque", minimising the overwhelming sense of fear provoked by the uncanny, while comparing the Himalaya with the much more ideal scenario of the Swiss Alps. An early example of this is the case of Mrs. Nina Mazuchelli (1832-1914). Acknowledged as the first woman to see Mount Everest in 1869, she wrote: "The greater, vaster mountains of the Himalaya are impossible alike to pen and pencil", pointing out that they would never be superior to the Swiss Alps picturesque appeal[115].

Similarly, the photographer Samuel Bourne (1834-1912), who made marvellous album prints depicting this mountain range´s void landscapes, referred to it as an interminable desert of emptiness, with no appeal at all. According to him, the Himalaya it was too gigantic and stupendous to be brought within the limited frame of a photograph, and concluding that, in comparison with the Alps greener landscapes, this scenery was "not so picturesque"[116]. Bourne´s solitary photos may be compared with William Hooker (1785-1865) and his landscape paintings done in 1848, during his botanical studies on the mountain range. Also reminiscent to its Alpine equivalent, Hooker also referred to the picturesque aspects of this scenario while stating that "the transparency of the pale blue

[114] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC Books, 1972), 16.
[115] Mazuchelli, *The Indian Alps*, 6.
[116]Sandeep Banerjee, "Not Altogether Unpicturesque: Samuel Bourne and the Landscaping of the Victorian Himalaya," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 42, (2014): 362-363.

atmosphere of this lofty region can hardly be described, not the cleanness and precision with which the most distant objects are projected against the sky"[117].

Fig. 31: Samuel Bourne, "Mount Moira and other Snows from the Glacier," 1866. Photograph. © Collection of Arthur Ollman. Source: Sandeep Banerjee, "Not Altogether Unpicturesque: Samuel Bourne and the Landscaping of the Victorian Himalaya," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 42, (2014): 354.

It would only be after John Ruskin´s further developments of the picturesque idea through his manual *Modern Painters*, published in 1854, when the Himalayan landscape could start to be depicted according to the West´s exotic ideals. In his renewed definition, Ruskin´s relevant ideas added to the definition of the picturesque the term of "scenic knowledge", understood as a combination between imagination and analytical eye. In this sense a better appreciation of the natural environment was accomplished, as the precision of its description was presented at the same time as the "intensity of its feeling"[118]. Thanks to this innovative proposal, new romantic representations of the Himalaya started to appear, while using the imagination as the most suitable tool to depict the sublime aspects of this mountain scene.

Fig. 32: "KinchinJanga from Mr. Hodgson´s Bungalow," 1854. Source: Joseph Dalton Hooker, *Himalayan Journals or Notes of a Naturalist*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray).

[117] Bishop, *The Sacred Myth of Shangri-La*, 114.
[118] John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (Boston: Dana Estes, 1990).

Fig. 33: "KinchinJanga from Singlam looking West," 1854. Source: Joseph Dalton Hooker, *Himalayan Journals or Notes of a Naturalist*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray).

One of the best strategies to conceal the supernatural mountain range and represent it according to the suitable ideals of the picturesque, was its depiction surrounded by thick clouds and fogs. Ghostly shadows through which the foreign spectator could peacefully observe these exotic landscapes, while shielded by the freedom of imagining what could be behind the mists. According to this, among the new generation of British landscapists William Tayler (1808-1892), a General of the British East Indian Company in Bengal, should be highlighted for his pastoral representations of the natural surroundings, while transforming the mountain´s vaporous formations into embellishments of the landscape and dynamic spectacles frozen in time[119]. Another example is the figure of the British illustrator Edward Lear (1812-1888) who in the following picture, "KangchenJanga from Darjeeling", blurred the far away mountains among mists while darkening the nearby forest with Indian ink[120].

Fig. 34: Edward Lear, "KangchenJanga from Darjeeling," 1879. Source: Yale Himalaya Initiative, accessed June 1, 2016, https://Himalaya.yale.edu/exhibits

[119] Romita Ray, "Misty Mediations: Spectral Imaginings and the Himalayan Picturesque," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 3, no. 11 (2012), accessed March 5, 2018, http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn12/ray-spectral-imaginings-and-the-Himalayan-picturesque

[120] This was recommended by Gilpin as the best material to overshadow the obscure areas. In Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 71.

In this way, the vast scenery of the Himalaya was finally depicted while being gradually transformed into a souvenir designed for visual consumerism, responding to the Western needs of possession the highest mountains of the world[121]. Therefore, the picturesque outlook has been introduced as a relevant tool that would be essential for the development of modern art in Nepal in later stages, not only for its aesthetical characteristics in the process of picturing the nation, but also for its contribution in the construction of the idea of Nepal according to its mystical, and also touristic, imaginary.

3.2. Hybridising picturesque and *paubhā* aesthetics: The pioneer case of Raj Man Singh Chitrakar.

> "Among the objects of art the picturesque eye is perhaps most inquisitive after the elegant relics of ancient architecture. They are the richest legacies of Art, consecrated in time, and deserve the veneration we pay to the Works of Nature." William Gilpin[122].

While Ruskin´s picturesque was adopted as the most adequate means to observe the Himalayan mountains through the application of Western exoticising registers of taste, the same idea could be applied to the illustrations done by the British residents in Kathmandu for their scientific studies about the wonders of the Himalaya.

As well as the Company Painters represented the flourishing of a new generation of local artists who started mixing the naturalistic styles with their traditional aesthetics in India, the British´s picturesque outlook were gradually introduced in the country´s local creativity through the collaboration of these researchers with the local painters, or *citrakār*[123]. One of the earliest examples in the establishment such collaborative projects was the one of Dr. Francis Buchanan-Hamilton (1762-1829), who in 1803 recorded more

[121] Banerjee, "Not Altogether Unpicturesque," 362.
[122] William Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 46.
[123] Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1850-1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 19-20. The Company Painters were a group of anonymous local artists from India who collaborated with The British East Indian Company for the representation of the country´s flora, fauna and cultural sites.

than 100 species of plants from Nepal, and assisted by a Bengali artist whose name is unknown[124]. Also Edward Garner, appointed British Resident in 1816, collected a significant number of Himalayan plants while being assisted by a small team of Indian painters, and even creating a garden in the Residency grounds. But most relevant in this regard is the figure of Brian Houghton Hodgson as he pioneered the study of Nepalese Buddhism and Himalayan zoology in the 1830s while employing, for the first time in history, a group of *citrakār* local artists from Kathmandu[125].

Fig. 35: Tursmoney Chitrakar, "Three carnivores," c. 1850. Source: William W. Hunter, Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson (London: John Murray, 1896), plate 11.

Trained in the principles of realism and photographic forms of representation, Hogdson´s pioneer artists depicted a wide range of accurate scientific illustrations of Nepalese birds and mammals. Also, specifically for their architectural drawings of Kathmandu´s Buddhists monuments and shrines, Hogdson provided them with a Camera Lucida to facilitate their understanding of perspective, and referring to the outstanding skills developed by his collaborators as follows: "Are they not wondrous work for a "*Nipalese*"? I have some more now executing which I dare any artist in Europe to excel and they are rigidly correct in their minutest detail"[126].

[124] Mark F. Watson, "Dr. Francis Buchanan-Hamilton: Pioneer for Nepalese Biodiversity," *The Britain-Nepal Society Journal,* no. 37 (2013): 31-33.

[125] The *citrakār* painters of Nepal appeared from a community of Buddhist monks who emmigrated to Kathmandu after the Muslim invasions in the 12th century, where they developed their painting styles while attending both Buddhist and Hindu clients to make a living. In Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Art. Issues Miscellany* (Kathmandu: Teba-Chi Studies Centre, 2012).

[126] David. M. Waterhouse, *The Origins of Himalayan Studies: Brian Houghton Hodgson in Nepal and Darjeeling* (Royal Asiatic Society Books: Routledge, 2004), 138.

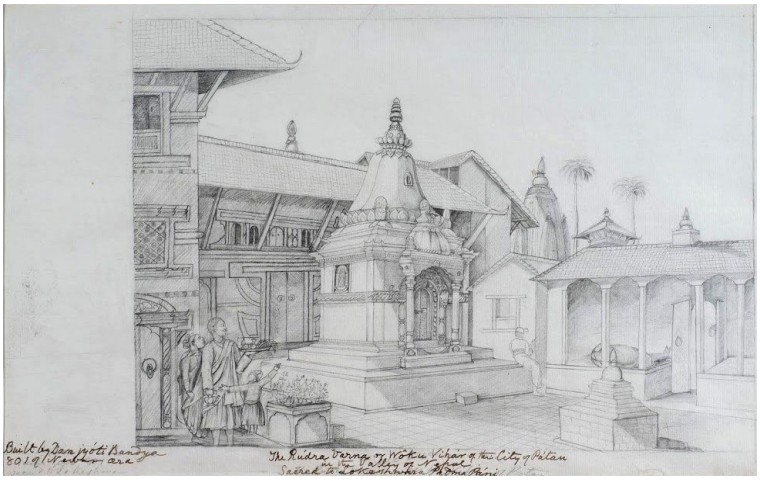

Fig. 36: Raj Man Singh Chitrakar, "*Uba Gathi Cha* Temple, Patan," 1884. Source: Royal Asiatic Society. Online Collections, accessed July 18, 2017, http://royalasiaticcollections.org/uba-gathi-cha-temple-

However, in order to properly analyse the aesthetical aspects developed in these pioneer works, this work highlights the *citrakār´*s own background as professional *paubhā* painters must not be ignored. The *paubhā*, meaning "cotton painting" in Newari language, was idealised as portable representation of the Buddhist gods and goddesses of Nepal around the 14th century[127]. As a ritualistic piece of art, the composition of a *paubhā* painting reproduces a mandalic frame, where the main divinity is represented in the middle while flanked by other minor gods and devoted human beings. These figures are always depicted following certain rules and regulations, written on manuscripts and verbal descriptions or *dhyāna*, in which the various attributes of Hindu or Buddhist divinities are indicated[128].

In this sense, the aesthetics of a Nepalese *paubhā* do not differ much from those developed in India where, according to Comaraswamy, both intellectual and emotional aspects are to be seen as the same side of the coin[129]. Such psycho-emotional parameters in Nepalese and Indian aesthetics are established through the idea of *bhāva* (feeling),

[127] The art of painting already existed in Nepal at least from the 11th century, as it is proved by the illuminations found in early Buddhist manuscripts, characterised for their plain backgrounds, lack perspective, use of dull colours and heaviness in their figurative aspects. Nevertheless, the advanced quality of the drawing and line style lead to suspect that the tradition of painting in Nepal might have started even earlier. According to the Chinese records of the Kathmandu Valley, back in the 7th century marvelous murals decorated the *newār* houses and the viharas during festival times. Nowadays completely lost, possibly as a consequence of the harsh climate and poor maintenance.

[128] Pal, *Art of Nepal,* 26-34.

[129] Ananda. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2010).

which was initially addressed in the Kama Sutra, along with other six essential elements for the establishment of the quality of the painting: *rūpabheda* (form), *pramāṇa* (proportions), *lāvaṇya-yojanā* (grace), *sādṛsya* (likeness), and *varṇika bhaṅga* (colouring)[130]. Accordingly, these rules were directly related to issues such as proportions based on mandalic patrons, or with the way an image should be represented while establishing different categories for gods or kings.

Fig. 37: Mandala of Chandra, God of the Moon, late 14th century. Distemper on cloth. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: THE MET. Online collection, accessed May 20, 2015, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/38344#

At the same time, all these aesthetical norms and divine attributes were related to the theory of *rasa*, meaning "juice" or "divine nectar", through which the aesthetical pleasures are connected with the motivation of our senses by the media of art. The first sacred text in which the importance of the *rasa* was addressed was the *nāṭyaśāstra*, or "Dance Treaty", written between the 4th and 2nd centuries BC. Later in the 7th century, the *visnudharnottara purāṇa* will constitute another early analysis of the *rasa*, but his time exclusively applied to the visual arts. In its *citrasūtra* section, this Purana states that every work of art has to represent particular *rasa*s in order to evoke particular feelings in the spectator. Also it indicates that every artist should have an appropriate knowledge of dance or drama, since the different colours, gestures and postures must be carefully used in order to effectively evoke the different *rasa*s in our minds.

To sum up, the aesthetical aspects of a *paubhā* painting are broadly articulated around their colourful aspects, the lack of shadows and sense of perspective, the drawing of figures in different sizes depending upon their relevance or status, and the amalgamation of differing elements even if they are not part of the original scene. A series of characteristics that may be compared to Hogdson´s scientific illustrations in several ways, and especially in the works of the renowned painter Raj Man Singh Chitrakar

[130] Eva Fernández del Campo, *Cánones del Arte indio* (Madrid: Abada Editores, 2013).

(1797-1865), who seems to have been Hogdson´s most assiduous collaborator during his time in Kathmandu[131].

Fig. 38: Raj Man Singh Chitrakar. © The Hogdson Collection at the Zoological Society of London. Source: Photo courtesy of Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2017.

For instance, with regard to the colourful aspects of *paubhā* painting, this aspect is clearly denoted in each of Raj Man Singh´s scientific works. As in spite of using the watercolour technique, instead of natural pigments, his illustrations usually present a strong chromatic palette proper of the *paubhā´*s designs. Besides, the lack of shapes and shadows are to be appreciated as another feature to be highlighted in *paubhā* traditional painting. But also particular of Raj Man Singh´s illustrations, where the representation of shadows seems to be applied only on few occasions and with a very restrained way, either underneath the figures or in some architectural depictions.

Fig. 39: Raj Man Singh Chitrakar. © The Hogdson Collection at the Zoological Society of London. Source: Photo courtesy of Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2017.

On the other hand, as well as the traditional *paubhā* is characterised by having plain backgrounds, the concept of perspective in Raj Man Singh´s realistic art works seems to be failing in many ways. With this regard, it is interesting to see how this idea is applied

[131] Apparently once after Hogdson left Kathmandu in 1843, Raj Man Singh kept on working as a scientific illustrator for Sir Henry Lawrence (1806-1857), until he decided to move to Darjeeling where Brian Hodgson was established, in 1846.

in the architectural representations of the following viharas, painted by Raj Man Singh in different points of time. And where we can appreciate how the far end of the monastery is represented significantly wider than the nearest wall[132]. While probably in those early stages Raj Man Singh´s painting skills were still unprepared to master the task of drawing with perspective, this particular attitude can also be understood as a consequence of the artist´s religious mind-set, as it is precisely in the far end of the vihara where the divinity´s shrine is traditionally located.

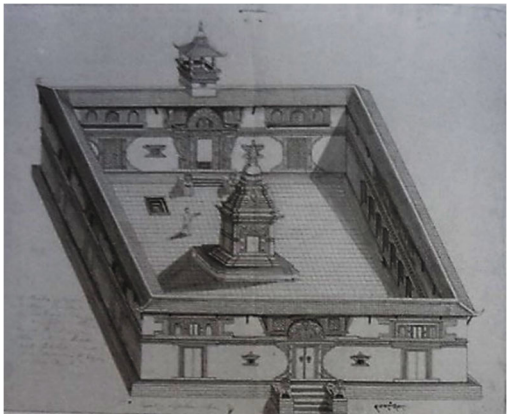

Fig. 40: "Model of a vihara." © Musée Guimet, Paris, Hodgson Collection. Source: William W. Hunter, Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson (London: John Murray, 1896), 90.

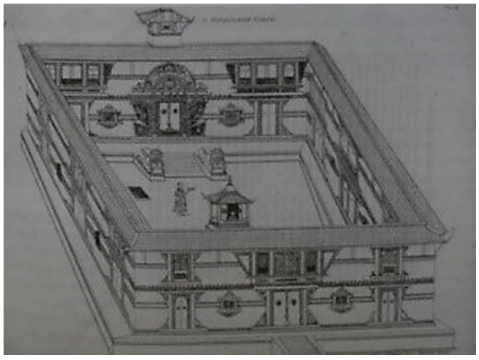

Fig. 41: "A Nepalese vihara. From a drawing by a Nepalese Painter." Lithograph by J. Netherclift from Hogdson´s "Scketch of Buddhism," 1830. Source: William W. Hunter, Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson (London: John Murray, 1896), 97.

It must be emphasized that also in *paubhā* traditional art the divine figure has to be depicted always in a large size, while the complementary elements would be smaller, depending upon their hierarchy as a secondary divinity, a King or a donor. These sizes are classified in the theory of proportions or *pramāṇa*, indicating precise instructions to be applied in every particular case[133]. An aspect that can also be compared with Raj Man Singh´s illustration "A group of *newār*", in which the figure at the middle has been represented in a considerably bigger size than the others surrounding him.

Additionally, following the latest trends of *paubhā* art and its inclusion of natural elements due to the Chinese and Mughal influences implemented in Nepal since the 18th century, imaginative backgrounds of clouds, mountains and trees started to be adopted as symbolical complements to the main divinity represented. As the *citrasūtra* beautifully

[132] Waterhouse, *The Origins of Himalayan Studies*, 90-97.
[133] Pratapaditya Pal, *The Arts of Nepal. Part II: Painting* (Köln: E.J. Brill, 1974), 34.

describes “the sky should be shown colourless and full of birds, celestial dome with stars. Earth should be shown with forest regions and watery regions with their traits. A mountain should be shown with assemblages of rocks, peaks, minerals, trees, birds and beasts of prey. Water is to be represented with innumerable fish and tortoises, with lotus-eyed aquatic animals and with other qualities natural to water”[134]. Precisely, it is this imaginative style which seems to be applied in Raj Man Singh´s paintings in times of representing a landscape scene, we can see this in the case of his work “General Bhim Sen´s house in the hills”, where the artist seems to have followed a tendency more inclined to the Mughal fashion styles, far from those picturesque environments introduced by the British painters in the Himalayan mountain range years before.

Fig. 42: “A group of *newār* types.” Source: Charles Allen, *The prisioner of Kathmandu. Brian Hodgson in Nepal 1820-43* (Great Britain: Haus Publishing, 2015), 58.

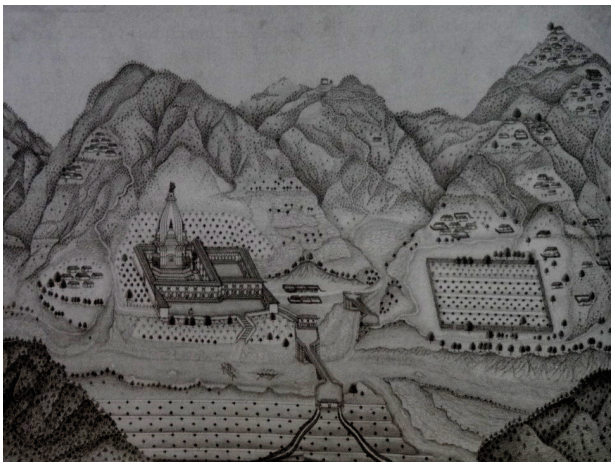

Fig. 43: “General Bhim Sen´s house in the hills.” © Musée Guimet, Paris, Hodgson Collection. Source: William W. Hunter, Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson (London: John Murray, 1896), 98.

[134] Pal, *The Arts of Nepal*, 28.

3.3. Portrait makers: Defining the figure of the court artists of Nepal.

Besides the particular case of Raj Man Singh Chitrakar, the fact that many of Hogdson´s illustrations were done by anonymous artists must be understood according to the Nepalese traditional frame. Here, the process of depicting a divine being is considered as an act of submitted devotion and selfless practice, thus the work cannot be signed by its author[135]. Indeed, according to the performative culture of Nepal, the figure of the artists is to be seen as a mere instrument chosen for the holy task of representing a god, and even compelled to go through a series of self-purifying rituals beforehand. On the other hand, the merit of creation is instead granted to the patron, who commissions the art work in order to attain spiritual merits and the favour of the holy divinity represented. In other words, within in the Nepalese traditional background, the process of making art has to be understood as a collaborative work between the patron who visualises the work and the artisan who materialises it.

Possibly due to his open admiration for the *citrakār* painting skills, Brian Houghton decided to give a step forward by acknowledging Raj Man Sigh Chitrakar as the author of his illustrations, and giving him permission to sign his paintings in Nagari script[136]. But in spite of his relevance as a pioneer in the introduction of the Western techniques in Kathmandu, it cannot be said that Raj Man Singh was the first *citrakār* painter to have been historically acknowledged as an artist in Nepal. For instance, already back in the 12th century, during the second diffusion of Buddhism in the Tibetan Empire, the Lamas employed hundreds of *newār* artists so as to serve as craftsmen in important cities such as Lhasa or Gyantse. Among them, the artist Araniko (1245-1306) has become

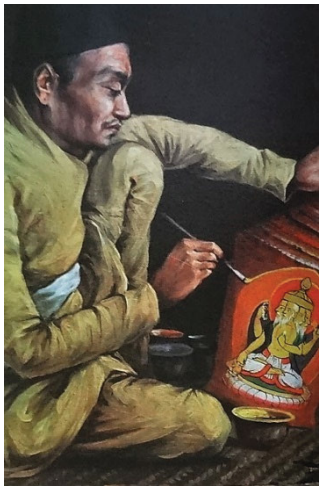

Fig. 44: Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, "One who creates a creator," 1967. Oil. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. Icon of a Transition* (Kathmandu: Teba-Chi Studies Centre, 2004), 86.

[135] Staneshwar Timalsina, "Time and Space in Tantric Art," in *Nepal. Old Images, New Insights,* ed. Pratapaditya Pal (Mumbai: Mara Publications, 2004), 21-35.

[136] There is another slight recognition of an artist named Tursmoney Chitrakar, whose signature appears in one of Hodgson´s natural paintings, currently in the Natural History Museum of London, and represented here in fig. 35. In Waterhouse, *The Origins of Himalayan Studies*, 99-137.

nowadays a national symbol, representative of the Nepalese outstanding creative skills in ancient times. Since, after a period of work in Lhasa at the head of a group of *newār* craftsmen, Araniko was proudly employed by the powerful Yuan Dynasty of China and the great Emperor Kublai Khan[137].

Similarly, a significant distinctiveness between the categories of the acknowledged artist and the anonymous artisan seems to have been established in the early Malla period. With this regard, Madan Chitrakar casts light on a big *paubhā* dated of 1470 and entitled "Gangasim and his two wives, painted by Adyaraja Puna and Udayrama Puna". Apparently, the particular mention of the artist´s names gives a hint of their status as members of the high society, indicating the existence of court painters employed as portrait makers in the 14th century[138].

Fig. 45: Adyaraja Puna and Udayrama Puna, "Gangansim with his two wives," 1470. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Painting through the Ages* (Kathmandu: Patan Museum), 15.

On the other hand, in *The Arts of Nepal* Pratapaditya Pal states that the idea of portraiture in Nepalese art started to be conceived back in the Licchavi period, pointing

[137] Arniko is also credited to have introduced the technique of bronze casting in Tibet and having written the book *A Canon of Proportions*, later translated to Chinese and Japanese. In Aran, *The Art of Nepal*, 203.
[138] Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Painting through the Ages* (Kathmandu: Patan Museum), 34.

out an early example in an illumination of the 12th century, where the commissioners of the work are represented by a bearded man and his wife by his side[139]. Also in the first *paubhā* paintings Kings and patrons would often appear symbolically represented at the bottom of the painting and in an attitude of worshipping the central God. However, it has to be said that these early portraits were not faithful representations, but imagined depictions according to the established norms and the status of the subject in question[140]. Moreover, while these portraits could not represent emotions on their faces, they were characterised by adopting theatrical gestures that were often accompanied by dancing scenes, musicians playing cymbals, drums and horns[141].

Fig. 46: Mandala of Chandra, God of the Moon, late 14th century. Distemper on cloth (detail). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: THE MET. Online collection, accessed May 20, 2015, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/38344#

The art of Nepalese portraiture in more realistic ways would not appear until the late 18th century, influenced by the Mughal painting styles promoted by Emperor Akbhar (1542-1605) from India, as a unique confluence between Persian, Indian and European art. Later Jahangir (1569-1627) introduced the trend of equestrian portraits for the provincial governors, including panoramic landscapes and natural elements in the background of the paintings[142]. Therefore, it was during the late Malla period when the Nepalese aristocracy started to be portrayed as maharajas wearing Mughal attires, ornaments and weapons, and Rajput style palaces complementing the painting´s background. According to this, Bal Krishna Sama states how Prithvi Narayan Shah gathered all the artists of *Nepāl* for a public competition, in which they were requested to draw his portrait as an Emperor, and been the wining picture the one that depicted the ruler with a rose in his hand, probably fig. 49[143].

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[139] Pal, *The Arts of Nepal*, 124.

[140] For instance, in the case of a king he should be depicted with the grace of a swan, with features such as beautiful smooth face, serpentine arms and slim waist.

[141] Ibid., 101.

[142] Partha Mitter, *Indian Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 114-138.

[143] Narayan Bahadur Singh, "*The History of Contemporary Nepali Painting.* Kathmandu: Nepal Academy, 1976" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

Fig. 47: King Pratap Malla. 18th century. © Chhauni National Museum. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Painting through the Ages* (Kathmandu: Patan Museum), 218.

Fig. 48: King Mahindra Malla (1560-1566). © Chhauni National Museum. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Painting through the Ages* (Kathmandu: Patan Museum), 213.

In a similar way, the *mukhtiyār* Bhimsen Thapa took further steps in the development of Nepalese portraiture while adopting Western dress and foreign attitudes in his Mughal-style paintings[144]. Nevertheless, it has to be said that no artist´s name is known during Bhim Sen Thapa´s or Pritvi Narayan´s time. This may be due to Jayasthiti Malla´s caste reforms in the late 14th century, where the *citrakār* caste of painters were placed in the lowest social ranks of the *newār* community, thus for many centuries they would not be permitted to sign their paintings, even if working as portrait makers for the Nepalese court.

On the other hand, the acknowledgement of the *citrakār* painter as an artist would not arise again until the onset of the Rana period. As Jang Bahadur Rana wanted to implement the realistic styles of portraiture in the court of Nepal, during his historical trip to European lands he brought along with him a selection of *citrakār* traditional painters in order to learn the Western styles. Among them the most representative figure was the one of Bhaju Man Chitrakar (1817-1874)[145]. With regard to Bhaju Man´s early portrait

[144] Mark Liechty, *Out Here in Kathmandu. Modernity on the Global Periphery* (Kathmandu: Martin Chautari Press, 2010), 101-103.

[145] Possibly referring to this artist, *L´Evénement* published that "…One of the members of the ambassador's retinue, an enamel painter at the Nepalese court, succeeded during his short stay in Paris in making very

"General Bam Bahadur Rana" of the 1850s, Madan Chitrakar points out that this work, rendered in tempera, is an "exquisite example of a unique blend of the local school with Rajasthani and Mughal schools"[146].

Fig. 49: King Prithvi Narayan Shah, late 18th century. © Chhauni National Museum. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Painting through the Ages* (Kathmandu: Patan Museum), 221.

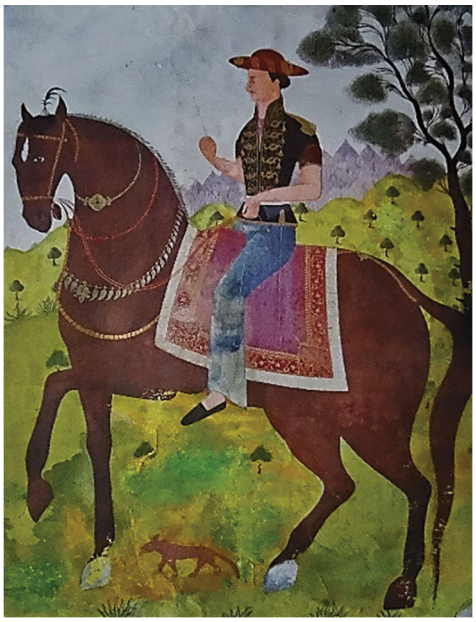

Fig. 50: Young Bhimsen Thapa. © Chhauni National Museum. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Painting through the Ages* (Kathmandu: Patan Museum), 230.

However, Bhaju Man´s rapid evolution from the Mughal to the Western realistic styles of painting cannot be denied, when presenting his depiction of "H. E. General Sir Jang Bahadur Kunwar Rana (1817-77)" in a picturesque style, and dated around the same time. According to Madan Chitrakar, the Prime Minister was so pleased with Bhaju Man´s creative development that he gave him a pair of large gold earrings studded with diamonds, locally known as *Gokuls*, and even organised a street parade, in which Bhaju Man was pompously exhibited while riding an elephant[147]. In this way, the figure of the artist o as the one capable of mastering the Western techniques and painting styles started to be again acknowledged in modern Nepal.

accurate copies of several paintings and portraits which will serve him as models for the pictures he will be commissioned to paint when he reaches his native land". In Whelpton, *Jan Bahadur in Europe*, 280-81.

[146] Madan Chitrakar, "Bhaju Man Chitrakar (1817-1874)," *Praxis*, accessed December 2, 2017, http://praxis.bluecoffeenepal.com/bhajumanchitrakar18171874c/

[147] Ibid,.

Fig. 51: Bhaju Man Chitrakar, "General Bam Bahadur Rana," c. 1850. © Collection of Sudharsham Bikram Rana. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Art. Issues Miscellany* (Kathmandu: Teba-Chi Studies Centre, 2012), 86.

Fig. 52: Bhaju Man Chitrakar, "H. E. General Sir Jang Bahadur Kunwar Rana (1817-77)," 1849. © The British Library Board. Source: British Library, images online, accessed June 15, 2017.

4. “Cross-cultural” illusions. The Ranas´ theatrical stages.

Although the collaboration of Brian Houghton Hogdson with the local *citrakār* painters for his scientific studies has been highlighted as a pioneer step towards the onset of modern art in the country, this historical work establishes the official frame of this creative change since the beginning of the Rana period in 1850. Fascinated as they were by the West´s exotic living styles, for more than a hundred years the Rana rulers imported large amounts of European goods and customs to Nepal, while stimulating the local production of portraits, sculpture and palaces in the development of a “Ranaesque” classical style.

Since these innovative forms of art supposed an apparent break with the “traditional” patterns of the country´s ancient art and culture, the Rana period has often been rejected by the nationalists as a process of “Occidentalization”, during which the Nepalese cultural identity and its unique heritage was at risk to get lost. As the modern painter Gehendra Man Amatya, declares “After Jang Bahadur returned to Nepal, the “Nepaliness” deteriorated and European influences came to the fore, as he was really intoxicated with the influence of the Western art forms”[148].

Such a negative perception about the Ranas´ creative styles was also enhanced by the foreigners´ nostalgic views for the country´s traditional past, according to the idea of enchanting Nepal as Shangri-La. At the beginning of the 20th century the adventurous traveller Alexandra David Neel commented about the sumptuous “Italian style” Rana palaces as “outstanding contrasts with the old *newār* houses”, and criticised by the foreigners visiting the Valley as “inharmonious constructions and banal copies of the Western styles”[149]. Also, in Han Su Yin´s popular novel *The Mountain is Young* the fictitious character of Dr. Maltby refers to the Rana palaces in the following words: “The

[148] In Gehendra Man Amatya, “Relationship Between Art and Politics, *Art Perspective Weekly* 1, no. 22 (2014)” (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha, Unpublished manuscript, 2015).
[149] David-Neel, *En el corazón del Himalaya*, 76.

family like to receive guests in here (drawing room) (…) isn't it odd, when the *newār*s are such artists and craftsmen, to find that their rulers, the Rana, had no taste at all?"[150].

It has to be said that such feeling of rejection against the Ranas´ "Occidentalisation" has continued for many years until today. But in spite of this, the recent studies on Nepalese modern culture have started to look to the historical importance of the Rana period with a more positive outlook. For instance, even if Hutt points out these "white mole´s questionable taste" as disrupting forms of art against the ancient architecture of the Valley of *Nepāl*, he also recognises such process of appropriation of the foreign styles as a departing point for the development of modern art in the Kingdom[151]. Therefore, in order to properly understand the Ranas´ Occidental styles, the following chapter proposes to analyse the "Ranaesque" trends as a result of a nationalised process of adaptation of the foreign picturesque styles with the performative culture of traditional Nepal, while using these alien styles for the theatrical display of the Ranas´ quasi-divine power towards the international world.

Fig. 53: Rana family. Source: Local style. Dress and jewelry of the Ranas o Nepal, accessed September 8, 2016, http://local-moda.blogspot.com/2013/03/dress-and-jewelry-of-ranas-of-nepal.html

[150] Han Suyin, *The Mountain is Young* (Great Britain: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1958), 67.
[151] Hutt, *Nepal*, 63.

4.1. Mirroring the elite. Divinising performances with the Western exotic trends.

During the initial times of the process of "Occidentalization", the ambivalent attitude of isolated *Nepāl* while developing its international relations must be emphasized. In this sense, at the same time as the Ranas projected a friendly attitude towards the British Empire, as a support to their rule in the Kingdom of the Himalaya, they safeguarded the country´s independence while promoting paradoxical measurements that denigrated the foreignness towards the local eyes. For instance, even if Jang Bahadur Rana was an open admirer of the Western exotic trends, in the *Muluki Ain*, or the "Law of the Nation", he pointed out that both Muslims and Europeans should be regarded as part of the "unclean castes". Moreover, everyone returning from the "impure lands" had to go through a series of rituals in order to restore their social status, which were symbolically practiced by Jang Bahadur himself so as to set an example.

Such open and closed aversion towards foreignness in Nepal was also remarked by David-Neel, when during her way to Kathmandu she met with a charming and educated Nepalese noble man dressed in British attire, but who openly manifested his annoyance as she, a sinful *mlecha* or "Western savage", had been allowed to enter the Country of the Gods[152]. However, the ambivalent attitude of the Nepalese towards the foreigners is noted in further chapters, where David-Neel recounts how during her visits around the different areas of the Kathmandu Valley, the people abandoned their Gods and pujas to come and "see the exotic stranger"[153].

[152] David-Neel, *En el corazón del Himalaya*, 20-21.
[153] Ibid., 84.

At the same time, the process of nationalisation of the Western creative trends within the Nepalese background is to be understood within the tradition of creating a visual language for the elite that divided the high society´s cultural habits from those of the common dwellers of *Nepāl*. In this way, as well as the ancient Kings of *Nepāl* used to embrace Sanskrit for the literary creations at the court, the Ranas´ Occidental tendencies are to be appreciated as the new art of the elite, exclusively developed within palace grounds and forbidden to the local inhabitants of *Nepāl*.

Fig. 54: Palace courtyard. Fresco. Bhaktapur. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Painting through the Ages* (Kathmandu: Patan Museum), 25.

Fig. 55: Hanuman Dhoka palace, c. 1940. Kathmandu Durbar Square. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

However, it seems that the foreign influences could not be completely avoided, provoking slight changes in the people´s customs already during the Rana times. According to this, during his visit to the Valley of *Nepāl* in 1886, Le Bon commented his surprise when observing that among the murals of traditional deities decorating the houses walls during festival times, there were also representations of "Napoleon, the Holy Virgin and of a Parisian harlot". Concluding that Napoleon´s image was considered as one of Vishnu´s avatars, while "the French damsel was an important Goddess, because of her dress"[154].

Likewise, even if it cannot be officially said that the Rana rulers saw themselves as divine beings, it can be stated that their powerful figures were somehow respected as such by the local population. In *thāru* folklore the mythical figure of Jang Bahadur appears "under a King cobra standing half erect and spreading his hood over Jang´s head as a protective umbrella", as a significant episode comparable to the one of Buddha meditating under the monsoon and

Fig. 56: Singha Durbar (Lion Palace), built as the residence of maharaja Chandra Shumshere in 1903. © Collection of Nanda SJB Rana. Source: Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The*

[154] Le Bon, *Voyage to Nepal*, 49.

being protected by the hook of a cobra under the rain[155].

Such divinising status is also reflected in the numerous neo-classical palaces that nowadays form part of Kathmandu's urban landscape[156]. Even if inspired by the foreign trends, the Rana palaces must also be understood as derivations of the Mughal architectural styles imported into the country since the end of the Malla period, which were "built in the shape of a cube, with a pillared porch on the entrance side, and the whole temple raised on a huge plinth with leant certain dignity to the structure"[157].

Fig. 57: Royal Palace in Nepal, 1958. Source: Pinterest, accessed January 18, 2018, https://www.pinterest.com/pin/312085449148644936/

The majority of these palaces were edified over the twenty-nine years of Prime Ministership of Chandra Shumshere Rana (1863-1929), during which the maharaja built important establishments such as the Singha Durbar, said to be fashioned after the Palace of Versailles in France. Half destroyed after a fire in 1973, this was an enormous structure with seven courtyards and more than a thousand rooms, with its own theatre and gallery. Also, it had picturesque gardens decorated with fountains, Greek-style statues, and even a deer park, which contrasted with the golden decorations of its chambers inside[158]. Lavishly loaded with different kinds of marble floors imported from Italy, coloured mirrors from Belgium, crystal chandeliers and glass-doors from England, and all kinds of furniture, carpets from Persia, or even porcelain vases from China[159]. The Ranas´ picturesque chambers were, according to Oldfield, "crowded together in the most curious

[155] Whelpton, *Jan Bahadur in Europe,* 7.

[156] Although at the present time many of these palaces have been destroyed as a consequence of modern development.

[157] Adrian Sever, *Nepal Under the Ranas,* (United Kingdom: Asia Publishing House, 1993).

[158] Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2002), 139-140.

confusion, and in a manner which shows that though their present owners may value them as curiosities, they are utterly ignorant of or incapable of appreciating their real use"[160].

In addition, every wall of the enormous Rana palaces were also decorated with sumptuous portraits with golden frames, similarly to the typical *toraṇas* surrounding the images of the Nepalese Gods, and in which both maharanis and maharajas were depicted in their best attires, surrounded by an overwhelming sense of magnificence and pomp.

Fig. 58: View of a Rana palace from the inside. Source: Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2002), 165.

These portraits were possibly inspired by Jang Bahadur´s impressions about the Palace of Versailles, where, according to him, "in every room there were portraits that looked as if they were about to speak"[161]. Indeed, during Jang Bahadur´s historical trip to European lands the Prime Minister frequented palaces, opera houses and museums, while manifesting deep impression by the picturesque styles of Western realism. On such grounds, *Le Constitutionel* explained how during his visit to the Louvre, he "particularly appreciated the naval gallery, the battle paintings, the weapons and the ethnographic room", significantly pointing out to the Chinese drawings as "the one´s which gave him more pleasure"[162].

In order to import the realistic styles of Western portraiture to the court of Nepal, Jang Bahadur ordered copies of life-size portraits of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, which would be sent to the Valley a few months after his return. During the reception of these paintings in Kathmandu, the Nepalese people worshipped them as if they were truly Gods, offering them pujas and flowers, along with a ceremony including dances and gun salutes[163]. This paradoxical attitude has to be taken into account as an early step in the process of reformulation of the modern art forms into the traditional ones, and how also modern art was always understood as a tool to be utilised in the ritualistic practice of worshipping the figure represented.

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[160] Oldfield, *Sketches from Nepal*, 106-107.
[161] Whelpton, *Jan Bahadur in Europe,* 167.
[162] *Le Constitutionel*, August 24. In Whelpton, *Jan Bahadur in Europe,* 267.
[163] Amatya, "Relationship Between Art and Politics".

Fig. 60: Queen Alexandrina Victoria. © Chhauni National Museum. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

Fig. 61: Prince Albert. © Chhauni National Museum. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

It seems that Queen Victoria´s exotic dress would represent an inspiration for the development of new fashion styles adopted by the Rana maharanis, whose outstanding costumes became a sort of hybrids between the Indian sari and the classic Western style. These were often decorated with Chinese brocades and rich garments inspired by the Mughal attires of maharani Jhindan (1817-1863), who was exiled to Nepal after the British annexation of the Punjab in 1846[164]. It was this hybrid essence characteristic of the Ranas´ costumes and jewels, what denotes that these rulers were open not only to British influences, but to all sorts of innovative styles coming from different parts of the world.

Fig. 62: A photograph of maharaja Chandra Shumshere wearing the Order of Thong-Jin-TG-Pimma-Kokang-Wang-Syan presented by the Chinese Emperor Suan Tung, 1907. © Collection of Pashupati SJB Rana. Source: Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2002), 78.

Fig. 63: Dirga Man Chitrakar, "maharaja Chandra Shumshere after beign awarded by the British with the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath." © Collection of Kiran Man Chitrakar. Source: Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2002), 163.

This attitude was an efficient strategy to ingratiate Nepal with the different areas surrounding the Kingdom of the Himalaya as an independent nation-state. Thus, as we can see in figs. 62 and 63, the Chinese styles of some of the maharaja´s costumes and attires should be highlighted as a way to get closer with the northern Empire, at the same time the appropriation of the Western trends was as a way to establish friendly relations with the foreign neighbours of the south.

[164] K. Mojumdar, *Anglo-Nepalese Relations in the Nineteenth Century* (Kolkata: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1973), 66.

4.2. From the Government School of Art in Calcutta, to the Juddha Kala Pathsala in Kathmandu: Fine Arts education in the Valley of the Gods.

The introduction of Queen Victoria´s and Prince Albert´s paintings into the Valley of *Nepāl* was an inspirational landmark in the development of the Rana portraits, which trnsformed their traditionally plain backgrounds -as we can see in the work "Painting of Ganesh Kumari, mother of Jang Bahadur"- into picturesque environments through the depiction of forests, waterfalls and mountains in the background of these photographs and paintings.

As well as the Rana portraits were used for empowering themselves as the rulers of the Himalaya in both foreign and local eyes, Partha Mitter states how during the colonial times, portraiture also supposed a tool for the creation of new ideas and the re-construction of one´s *self* image in India[165]. In a similar way, Liechty highlights the Rana´s appeal for the foreignness as "not the story of European embrace, but the story of embrace of European things", concluding that the "Occidentalisation" is the consequence of the innovative process of "seeing and being seen"[166]. In this sense, the idea of the *self* becomes important as something to be projected, while mirroring one´s image through the techniques of photography and portraiture.

Fig. 64: Painting of Ganesh Kumari, mother of Jang Bahadur. © Collection of Pashupati SJB Rana. Source: Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2002), 37.

[165] Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, 80.
[166] Liechty, *Out Here in Kathmandu*, 122.

Fig. 65: Maharaja Bir Shumshere and his first Bada Maharani Top Kumari Rajya Laxmi Rana, 1890. © Collection of Madan Puruskar Pustakalaya. Source: Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2002), 59.

Fig. 66: Maharaja Chandra Shumshere with his Jethi (eldest) Bada Maharani Chandra Lok Bhakta Devi Rana. © Collection of Pashupati SJB Rana. Source: Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2002), 119.

Due to the increase of the Ranas´ tastes for Western classical styles, the innovative techniques of photography and oil painting started to proliferate among the young artists residing in Kathmandu[167]. However, even if many *citrakār* artists were employed at the Naksa Adda for the production of huge picturesque backgrounds needed for the Ranas´ photographs and private theatres, still they were not capable of mastering the art of realistic portraiture due to the absence of a Western school of art in Nepal. For this reason, until the beginning of the 20th century the picturesque Rana portraits had to be done by expensive British painters, whose rates were extremely high even for the wealthy maharajas[168].

[167] The photographic technique was initially introduced in Nepal when Clarence Comyn Taylor (1830-1879) was commissioned by the British East Indian Company to document the socio-cultural life of Kathmandu, during Jang Bahadur Rana´s rule. In Madan Chitrakar, "Sugauli Treaty & Nepali Art: Opening of New Avenues," *Spaces Nepal*, April 23, 2017, accessed March 13, 2018, http://www.spacesnepal.com/detailview123

[168] Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal,* 158.

Fig. 67: Field Marshal Kaiser Shumshere Rana posing for his portrait with the renowned artist Philip De Lázló in his studio in England, 1937. Source: Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2002), 161.

As a provisional solution, a few *citrakār* artists started to colour over monochrome photographs, in order to evoke the effects of realistic portraiture, such as the case of the court painter and photographer Dirga Man Chitrakar (1877-1951)[169]. However this situation could not be sustained for long, as soon the great proliferation of Rana palaces provoked an increase of the demand for large oil portraits for the decoration of their sumptuous homes.

Fig. 68: Jang Bahadur of Nepal with Bada Maharani. Source: Pinterest, accessed September 1, 2015, https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/138556126019344610/

For this reason, in the 1920s the Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere Rana took the initiative of implementing the skills of portrait painting among the *citrakār* artists of Nepal, choosing the renowned painters Chandra Man Singh Maskey (1900-1984) and Tej Bahadur Chitrakar (1898-1971) as pioneer artists to receive foreign art education at the Government School of Art in Calcutta.

These artist would become relevant landmarks in the development of modern art, due to their participation in the education of future picturesque painters. The first project of establishing a Western-style school of art in Nepal was the Kala Pathsala inaugurated in 1934 at Tri Chandra College, with a few number of students and the court painter Chatur Ratna Utdas employed as their instructor[170]. In 1938 this school was converted into the Juddha Kala Pathsala, opened by

[169] Sussane Von der Heide, *Changing Faces of Nepal. The Glory of Asia´s Past.* UNESCO Division of Cultural Heritage and Himal Asia. (Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1997), 18.

[170] Ram Kumar Bhaukajee, "*Contemporary Paintings of Nepal*, PhD diss., Moscow State Art Institute, 1988" (Trans.Tatiana Voronina. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

Prime Minister Juddha Shumshere Rana in order to provide designs for the cotton clothes produced in the Handicrafts Department[171]. It was here where Tej Bahadur Chitrakar would be employed, while Chandra Man Singh Maskey obtained the position of art teacher at the Durbar High School[172].

Fig. 69: Kalidash Shrestha, c. 1940. Pencil sketch. Source: Photo courtesy of Kalidash Shrestha, 2015.

Fig. 70: Tej Bahadur´s depiction of an Art school-Technical School, 1947. Watercolour. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. Icon of a Transition* (Kathmandu: Teba-Chi Studies Centre, 2004), 43.

It must be said that during the times when Chandra Man Singh Maskey and Tej Bahadur Chitrakar were being trained at the Government School of Art, India was going through a process of renaissance and renewal of its original art forms through the Swadeshi movement and the Bengal School of Art. This School, led by Mr. Ernest Binfield Havell (1861-1934) and Ananda Comaraswamy (1877-1947), established a breaking point with the Western-style academy in order to rescue the local, thus anticolonial, creative sources in India´s modern art. However, when Maskey and Chitrakar arrived in Calcutta, Mr. Havell, Principal of the Government School of Art, had already been substituted by the more conservative Percy Brown. He was the one who conducted the training of these Nepalese artists towards the picturesque technique, establishing the style that will characterise the development modern art during the whole Rana and Panchayat periods.

[171] Shalphalya, *Rana Rule in Nepal*, 118.

[172] One of the students at the Juddha Kala Pathsala was Kalidash Shreshta (1923-2016), whose sketchbooks made during his early student days have provided us with a hint on the teaching style developed at such pioneer school. Kalidash Shreshta, personal communication with the author, May 24, 2015.

Fig. 71: Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, "Lama." Gouache. One of the first realistic works of the artist, shown to Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere Rana before his studies in Calcutta. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. Icon of a Transition* (Kathmandu: Teba-Chi Studies Centre, 2004), 23.

Fig. 72: Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, "Baber SJB Rana." © Collection of Narottam Das Shrestha. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

Fig. 73: Maharani. © Collection of Narottam Das Shrestha. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

In a similar way, Percy Brown had been one of the first foreigners to highlight the relevance of the Nepalese ancient and exotic cultural styles in 1912, through his book (symbolically entitled) *Picturesque Nepal*, and which was illustrated by a series of watercolours of the Kathmandu Valley´s art and culture created by Mr. Brown himself, in collaboration with his wife Mrs. Muriel Brown. Particularly Mrs. Brown has to be historically credited in history for having organised the first art exhibition ever held in the Valley of *Nepāl*, at Tripureswhore Guest House in 1911, and where she

displayed a number of picturesque watercolours of Kathmandu´s cultural scenario. Therefore, due to Percy Brown´s conservative position against the revolutionary folk styles promoted by the Bengal School of Art, the "Nepaliness" idea in modern art was mainly conducted towards the picturesque representation of its cultural heritage. In this way, the trend of "picturing the nation" was interpreted as a way of representing the Ranas´ powerful rule trough the imagery of its mountains and durbars, while following the picturesque style promoted by the court painter from India, Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906)[173].

Fig. 74: Muriel Brown. "Kathmandu Durbar Square." Source: Percy Brown, Picturesque *Nepal* (New Delhi: Today & Tomorrow´s Printers & Publishers, 1912), 61.

Hence, it could be concluded that the Rana rulers used the tool of picturesque art to emphasize the enchantment of Nepal, but also as a way to state the Kingdom´s independence up to the last years of its regime. A fact that can be clearly seen in the following example of the mural decorations of a tiger hunt in the Tarai jungles around the walls of the Gallery Bhaitak, which was idealised by Juddha Shumshere Rana in the 1940s as a place for the official receptions of the few international guests allowed into the country during those times[174].

[173] Raja Ravi Varma was trained in the picturesque style in order to reflect India as an exotic lands, particularly through the depiction of mythological figures and exotic women as the symbols of Mother India for the international world. In Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism. Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000), p. 149.

[174] During the times of Mrs. Brown´s art exhibition in Kathmandu King George V, who had just attended the 1911 Delhi Durbar, visited Nepal after Chandra Shumshere´s special invitation to a hunting experience in the Tarai. Nevertheless, due to the lack of information regarding Mrs. Brown´s early exhibition, it cannot be stated if this event was visited by King George V. Curiously, it is likely that the Prime Minister Juddha Shumshere Rana depicted himself in the Gallery Bhaitak´s murals, imitating King George V during his visit thirty years before. In Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal,* 68-77.

Fig. 75: Bal Krishna Sama, 1939. Gallery Bhaitak. Source: Photo courtesy of Jeevan SJB Rana, 2015.

Fig. 76: Mural of the Gallery Bhaitak. © Chhauni National Museum. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

4.3. The transformation of *paubhā* art and the creator as the elite. Projecting while protecting international Nepal.

Soon after the art of landscape painting was introduced as a fundamental complement of the Rana portraits, the influence of Western picturesque styles would also mark a new path in the development of traditional *paubhā* painting. After the historical Anglo-Nepal war and the Segauli Treaty of 1816 Nepal was isolated from Tibetan patronage, thus the *paubhā* traditional art grew poorer and smaller due to the lack of economic support. Responding to the new demands and picturesque tastes adopted by the elites of Nepal, the *citrakār* local painters were compelled to develop their traditional

styles into photographic ways of representing a divine being against more naturalised backgrounds, imitating forests and trees with heavy foliage[175].

Fig. 77: Ananda Muni Shakya, "Padmapani on the Half Shell," c. 1940. Source: The Robert Beer Blog, accessed June 13, 2017, http://www.tibetanart.com/Blog/Post.asp?ID=84

One of the earliest *paubhā* painters to be recognised for his experimentations with the picturesque trends was the case of Ananda Muni Shakya (died 1945), whose realistic series of Asian divinities are to be appreciated as innovative works, which broke with the traditional rules strictly demarcated by the religious society of Nepal in those times. Thanks to his outstanding painting skills, around 1921 Ananda Muni got the opportunity to work in Tibet, where his work was influenced by the Chinese natural styles that were manifested in the use of landscapes, or even dragons on the sky of some of his paintings. Besides, we can see his influence on the picturesque art in his modern *paubhā* "Padmapani Lokeshvara on the Half Shell", where this divinity is represented in a similar way to Boticelli´s "Birth of Venus"[176].

Significantly, Ananda Muni Shakya even signed his works on a plaque placed on the lower side of the silk frame that protected the piece. According to this, the fact that he belonged to the high caste of the Kshatriya must be pointed out, as it is extremely likely that, in those early times, a common *citrakār* painter would never have been allowed to do such experiments with the holy image of a divine being. With this regard, it would be only after the fall of the Rana regime that some painters started to be acknowledged for their picturesque experimentations with traditional art, such as the case of Manik Man Chitrakar (1908-1987) whose narrative paintings were presented as innovative hybrids between Mughal and Western styles[177].

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[175] Chitrakar, *Nepali Art. Issues Miscellany*, 50.

[176] This work is also painted with monochrome colours, possibly due to the artist´s awareness of black and white photography used at the Rana court. In Beer, July 29, 2012, "Anandamuni Shakya," *The Robert Beer Blog*, accessed June 13, 2017, http://www.tibetanart.com/Blog/Post.asp?ID=84

[177] Ian Asop,"*Traditional Religious Painting in modern Nepal. Seeing the Gods with new Eyes,*" in *Nepal. Nostalgia and Modernity*, ed. Deepak Shimkhada (Mumbai: The Marg Foundation, 2011), 48.

This caste distinction can also be applied to the case of Bal Krishna Shumshere Rana (1903-1981), one of the most renowned of modern littérateurs and painters, and to his assistant the outstanding painter Amar Chitrakar (1920-1999), who worked along with Bal Krishna since the 1940´s until the end of the Rana period. This unusual collaboration must be analysed throught the traditional prism of the guru-student relationship, where the guru was respected as, in Mlecko´s words, "a manifestation of the Absolute, a god or God, a vehicle of God´s grace, or an essential guide or the spiritual path"[178].

Fig. 78: Manikman Chitrakar, "Durga *Mahiṣāsuramardiṇī*," 1950. Distemper Colours on card. Source: Pal, Pratapaditya, ed., *Nepal. Nostalgia and Modernity* (Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2011), 49.

In spite of being a member of the powerful Rana family, Bal Krishna was a nationalist very much concerned for the people of Nepal. In his multifaceted creations he always defended the welfare of the Nepalese, while using the power of visual art and culture as a mean to awake the people´s consciousness against social injustice. Since his political acts were considered as a menace for the Rana autocracy in 1948 he was sent to prison as a revolutionary artist, due to which Bal Krishna gave up his family name, Rana, for the nickname *Sama*, which means "equal" in Nepali.

Fig. 79: Bal Krishna Sama, "A painting of maharaja Juddha Shumshere," 1931. Oil on canvas. © Collection of Jeevan SJB Rana. Source: Prabhakar. S. J. B. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 2002), 158.

[178] Joel D. Mlecko, "The Guru in Hindu Tradition," *Numen*, 29 (1982): 58, accessed March 12, 2018. doi: 10.2307/3269931.

An important dramaturge, Bal Krishna Sama seems to have taken the theatrical environment to both his literary and painting styles. In this sense, while on the one hand his poetry works are powerfully descriptive, his realistic paintings seem to be more concentrated on the representation of the environment surrounding the main figure and its attitude, than in the portrait itself. A particular example of this is to be appreciated in his work "A painting of maharaja Judddha Shumshere", where the Prime Minister is ironically depicted a bit to the left side. Here, Bal Krishna seems to pay more attention to the elements surrounding the maharaja, such as the pigeons flying over the Minister´s head, or the half-open door through which the roof of a *newār* style house and a field-work can be barely appreciated.

Besides the performativity that lay behind his poems and paintings, Bal Krishna Sama seems to have brought theatre into his own daily life, highlighting the decorative aspects of his house as his own stage. Accordingly, this beautiful construction was presented as an enchanting environment fully decorated with beautiful ceilings, carvings, paintings and murals, and a couple of Buddha´s eyes in the main entrance, resembling the *harmikā* of a Nepalese stupa. Also, it is important to highlight the murals depicted by both Bal Krishna Sama and Amar Chitrakar, around the walls of Bal Krishna´s sleeping room, decorated with low-reliefs of clouds and surrounded by the picturesque scene of a pond at sunrise or sunset[179].

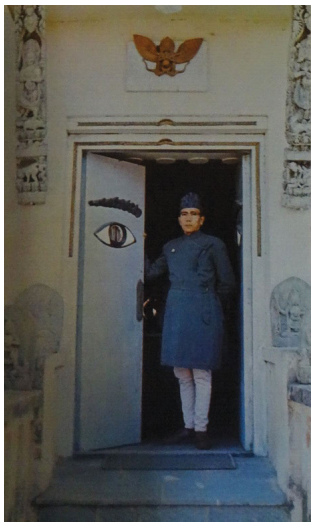

Fig. 80: Bal Krishna Sama at his doorstep. Source: Photo courtesy of Jeevan SJB Rana, 2015.

Fig. 81: Bal Krishna Sama´s house. View of the living room. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

[179] Jeevan Shumshere Rana, personal communication with the author, May 25, 2015.

The acknowledgement of the modern artist as the one who belonged to the higher castes of the social range is also reflected in the contested case of Chandra Man Singh Maskey and Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, since the first one enjoyed more privileges and facilities to exhibit his work than the second, due to his family line of well-established doctors in Kathmandu[180].

Fig. 82: Bal Krishna Sama´s house. View of the bedroom. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

Possibly for such reason, just after his return from the Government School of Art in 1928, Chandra Man Singh Maskey would be the one chosen to represent the country of Nepal in a painting exhibition at Tripureswhore Guest House, where Mrs. Brown had exhibited her picturesque watercolours years before. However, it must be said that while Mrs. Brown´s pictorial representations intended to be visual descriptions of Kathmandu Valley´s ancient art and architecture, Maskey´s paintings seemed to concentrate on the sheer Himalayan landscape and the natural scenario that for centuries had shielded the Valley. However, it would not be until the official onset of cultural tourism in the Country of the Gods in the 1950s, when the "traditional art" of Kathmandu Valley would start to be re-valued and preserved as a potential means of income, and large sums of international money were invested in every monument officially chosen to represent the Nepalese cultural heritage. Accordingly, while in 1928 the Chhauni National Museum was inaugurated as a weapon museum, with all the war-like machinery of both the Rana and the Shah Empires displayed in its huge halls, it would be in 1943

Fig. 83: Chandra Man Singh Maskey, "Fishtail," 1928. © Collection of Santosh Man Maskey. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

[180] David K. Barker, "Maskey, Premier Artist of Nepal. Part One" *ISSUU* (2012): 9, accessed October 6, 2015. http://issuu.com/dkbbkk/docs/maskey_part_one

when this Museum was converted into a proper art gallery, exhibiting ancient Licchavi and Malla pieces of ancient *Nepāl*[181].

To sum up, even if the Rana period has usually been addressed as a period of break with the Nepalese tradition and preference for cultural "Occidentalisation", in real the new creative trends developed during this regime should be historically reconsidered as part of the changeable characteristics of the country´s traditional heritage, which always transformed its cultural habits depending on its political relations with northern and southern influences since ancient times. But also as a consequence of its progressive "Orientalisation", according to the Western ideals of enchanting Nepal, as a means to protect the country and represent it as equal and powerful as the European Empires.

Also, it seems that in an initial stage the use of these Western styles and painting techniques was only allowed to be practiced by the artists belonging to the high social castes, as even if there were also *citrakār* painters developing these skills in their modern art works, there were only a few of them allowed to sign their paintings. The understanding of the figure of the modern artist as someone who pertains to the high society of the Kathmandu Valley is an important fact to take into account in times of analysing the same situation during the transition and Panchayat times, when the majority of the acknowledged modern artists happened to belong to the highest social ranks.

[181] Bhaukajee, "*Contemporary Paintings of Nepal*."

Part two

The transition: Between tradition and avant-garde.

> "Nepal is a land of ageless pagodas and other wondrous relics bearing testimony to her very ancient culture and civilisation (…) at least this is the impression that a casual visitor of Kathmandu valley carries back home." B.P. Koirala, 1959[182].

Since the beginning of the 20th century many Nepalese citizens went into exile to escape from Rana despotism, while receiving their formal education at British schools in India. Established in the adjacent Darjeeling district, these group of intellectuals will represent the seed of the political consciousness against the Rana regime, being motivated by India´s pro-democratic movements during the fight for its independence. In a parallel way, the onset of the Ranas´ political conflict inside Nepal was established when, in order to assure the role of succession, Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere implemented a new caste system through which the Rana family was organised into A, B or C status, depending on their birth. Such an elitist division would be the cause of enormous resentment among the B and C class Rana, who started conspiring against the A class rulers from the exile.

Due to the restrictions imposed by the Ranas in Nepal, the metaphorical arts of poetry and literature were used as relevant tools for the introduction of subversive idealisms into the Kingdom of the Himalaya, and transmitted mouth-to-mouth among its illiterate inhabitants[183]. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the Prime Minister managed to control the internal tensions, he could not prevent the introduction of the liberal idealisms that were even more exalted through India´s national fight against the British Empire.

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[182] Toni Hagen, *Nepal. The Kingdom in the Himalaya*, Lalitpur 1998.

[183] Michael Hutt, *The Life of Bhupi Sherchan. Poetry and Politics in Post-Rana Nepal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010).

In 1938 the Praja Parishad was organised as a clandestine party against Juddha Shumshere Rana´s regime, while favouring of restoration of King Tribhuvan´s power. This organisation worked in parallel with the Arya Samaj socio-religious movement and collaborated with renowned painters and poets, such as Chandra Man Singh Maskey, until the 1940s when the maharaja executed or imprisoned its members[184]. It was that which led to the configuration of new pro-democratic parties in exile, such as the All India Nepali National Congress, renamed as Nepali National Congress in 1947, with B.P. Koirala at its head[185]. Almost at the same time that India was granted its independence, this party organised the historical *Jana Andolan*, or "People´s Movement", which ended with the Rana autocracy in 1951, and finally restored King Tribhuvan´s power on the Royal throne. But in spite of the democratic promises and hopes, the ten years that followed the Rana´s fall were characterised for being the darkest period of development in the country´s political environment, ending up with King Mahendra´s coup in 1960 and the implementation of the Panchayat system[186]. This was a particularly traditional but "democratic" form of government that followed the Vaishnava cults, where the figure of the monarch, believed to be a reincarnation of this God, was established at its centre along with a series of elected councils constituted at village, district, zonal and state levels.

Fig. 84: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Portrait of B.P. Koirala," 1991. Oil on canvas. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991), image 27.

The transitional period of the 1950s has to be viewed as a relevant time in the process of the modernisation of Nepal, as it would be in this moment when the country experimented a series of irrevocable changes that not only affected its social and political environment, but signified the onset of a new era in modern art. On the one hand, as a consequence of the opening of the country´s frontiers and the set of the tourist industry

[184] Martin Hoftun and William Raeper, *Spring Awakening. An Account of the 1990 Revolution in Nepal* (Kathmandu: Penguin Books, 1992), 3.

[185] Baral, *Autocratic Monarchy*.

[186] The Panchayats, which means "councils of five", were traditional institutions in ancient India´s administration based on village councils of elders, whose main commitment was to hear and judge criminal cases in order to maintain social stability, although the King was the one who always had the final word. In Adrian Sever, *Aspects of Modern Nepalese History* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1996), 42.

Fig. 85: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Portrait of Lokanaya B.P. Koirala," 1991. Source: Dina Bangdel and Don Messerschmidt, *Against the Current. The Life of Lain Singh Bangdel. Writer, Painter and Art Historian of Nepal* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2004), 153.

and international market, the realistic styles of painting developed into a new sort of kitsch representations of mystical Himalayan landscapes and Kathmandu´s cultural heritage, according to the international demands as a "made in Nepal" cultural souvenir[187]. Mainly used as a mean of communication for the promotion of Nepal to the international world, these kitsch paintings were chiefly designed as a local response to the increasing tourist industry and the idea of Nepal as Shangri-La: An enchanting concept that had been initially established by the first foreign encounters with the Kingdom of the Himalaya, and further popularised by James Hilton´s novel *Lost Horizon* in 1933[188].

As part of the process of establishment of the new kitsch commercial art, King Mahendra launched the first Five Years Plan (1956-1961) for the encouragement of industrial development through the help of international aid, providing in this way local training and technical facilities for the manufacture of handicrafts as a new way to make a living for the local artisans in the country[189]. However, in times of analysing these kitsch art works, the traditional profession of the *newār* artists of Nepal as traders has to be taken into account as a relevant reason for the creative development of Kathmandu Valley in such a commercial way. Thus, depending on the different types of tourists, the *citrakār* painters developed their kitsch creative styles in:

a) The picturesque representations of the *newār* traditional culture and the architectural aspects of Kathmandu´s typical scenario, which started to be massively produced as souvenirs for the foreign visitors in the capital.

[187] Calinescu, *Cinco caras de la modernidad*, 222-236.
[188] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*.
[189] The "Five Years Plans" would be implemented one year after the other until 1980s, with the main aim of developing the country´s infraestructures through the help of foreign aid. In Malla, *Politics of Foreign Aid,* 20.

b) The hybrid images depicting the iconographies of Hindu and Buddhist gods, and tantric representations such as yantras or mandalas, particularly developed since the arrival of hippy idealisms and "neo-traditional" trends of spiritualism.
c) And the enchanting landscape scenarios of the mountains of Nepal, as a consequence of the rise of the trend of trekking in the Himalaya, particularly popularised since 1953 and the conquest of Mount Everest by Edmund Hillary (1919-2008) and Tenzing Norway (1914-1986).

5. Consequences of opening of Nepal during the 1950s period of change: An international ritual.

Already in 1866 during London´s *Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, the Rana rulers acceded to collaborate with the Residency Surgeon Mr. G.H.D. Gimlette, in order to represent the Himalayan culture at this international show. For this, a small court was organised on which several examples of Nepalese art and culture were displayed, such as the replica of a *newār* wooden window, brass and copper wares, cotton and silk fabrics, a set of musical instruments, weapons and jewellery items[190].

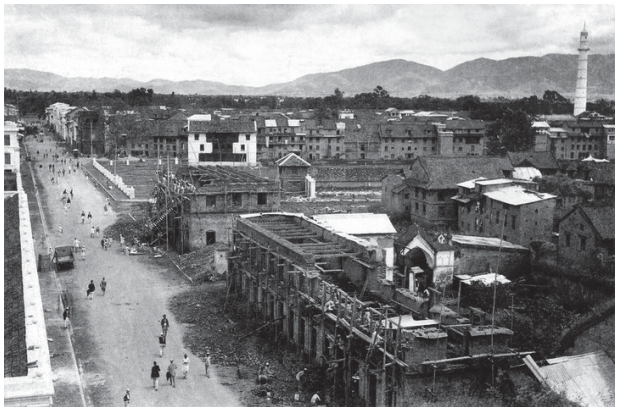

Fig. 86: A view over Juddha Saddhak, 1942. Source: Vintage pictures of Kathmandu, accessed June 18, 2017, http://sajha.com/sajha/html/index.cfm?StartRow=21&PageNum=2&threadid=62176

Fig. 87: The earthquake memorial in Bhugol Park after its inauguration, 1941. Source: Vintage pictures of Kathmandu, accessed June 18, 2017, http://sajha.com/sajha/html/index.cfm?StartRow=21&PageNum=2&threadid=62176

However, the initial step towards the opening of Nepal to the tourist enterprise was taken after Kathmandu´s ancient architecture was sadly devastated by the earthquake of 1934, as during the process of reconstruction, Juddha Shumshere Rana decided to modernise the area by building of western-style concrete houses all over the Nepalese capital.

[190] Also the military head-dresses "worn by the highest class, are of great value and composed entirely of diamonds, pearls and emeralds set in silver", were highlighted as a way to remind foreigners that Nepal was independent from the British Empire. In *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886. Official Catalogue (*London: William Clowes and Sons, Limited. 1886).

Particularly important were the destroyed parts of the ancient Malla palace at Kathmandu´s Durbar square, which would be symbolically named as Juddha Saddhak, and nowadays known as "New Road". This area was inaugurated in 1942 after an open-air exhibition behind Bhugol Park, in which selected artists such as Chandra Man Singh Maskey or Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, exhibited their picturesque representations of Kathmandu´s new architecture. This place was designed as an exclusive area for the Nepalese elite, where the first hotels, commercial business and also art galleries of Nepal were launched, such as the Kathmandu Art Gallery, inaugurated by the powerful art collector Narottam Das Shrestha (died 2016).

Belonging to a family *newār* bussinessmen, Mr. Shrestha was an art lover and entreperneur, whose Gallery was idealised as a way to start the commercialisation of modern art in Nepal among the local elites and the few foreigners visiting the country in those times. One of his most asiduous collaborators was the realistic *paubhā* painter Ananda Muni Shakya. But in spite of this artist´s outstanding skills, due to the lack of tourism in those early days, during its four years of activity the gallery only sold one single painting. Thus, it was forced to close down after Ananda Muni passed away in 1945[191].

Fig. 88: Ananda Muni Shakya, c. 1940. © Collection of Narottam Das Shrestha. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

It would be during this year when Tej Bahadur Chitrakar opened The Gallery Shop in order to offer his students the possibility of selling their paintings. Among them, he counted with the afore mentioned Amar Chitrakar, but also not less relevant Manohar Man Poon (1914-1990) and Dil Bahadur Chitrakar (1929-2010), outstanding masters of

[191] Narottam Das Shrestha, personal communication with the author, April 15, 2015.

the picturesque technique. However, this gallery was also forced to close down only a year later, due to the lack of art buyers in those times.

Nevertheless, these isolated by significant events meant that, by the time the frontiers of Nepal were officially opened up to the world, the country had already gone through a significant process of modernisation and change[192]. But it was not be until the fall of the Rana regime in 1951, and the official onset of the tourist industry in the Himalayan Kingdom, when Nepal would experiment a series of social and political transformations that would be reflected in the upsurge of the kitsch and avant-garde creative styles in modern art.

Fig. 89: Manohar Man Poon, "Clock Tower." © Collection of Srijana Art Gallery. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

5.1. Kitsch narratives of the Valley of *Nepāl*: A cultural souvenir.

> "Nepal, land of Gods. You should go there, Madame. There it is still Shangri-La. Snow peaks and temples, tigers and roses, palaces and gods, gods, gods. Everyone is a god there, man and beasts, stone and trees. Only the clichés of tourism could describe it: smiling Kathmandu, sunlit Nepal, and of course Shangri-La, Shangri-La." Han Su Yin, 1958[193].

Already since the beginning of the 20th century the Western spiritual "seekers", such as Alexandra David Neel, became popular icons due to their exotic writings and accounts

[192] Madan Chitrakar, personal communication with the author, May 10, 2015.
[193] Suyin, *The Mountain is Young*, 42.

about their illuminating experiences and adventures in the mountain range[194]. For instance Lama Govinda, whose real name was Ernst Lothar Hoffman (1898-1985), describes his mystical journey through the Tibetan landscape as a "dream-like" where "rain, fog, and clouds transformed the virgin forest, the rocks and mountains, gorges and precipices into a world of uncannily changing, fantastic forms, which appeared and dissolved with such suddenness that one began to doubt their reality as well as one´s own"[195].

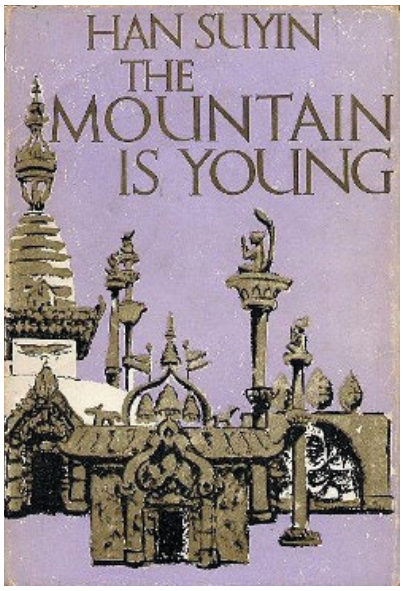

Fig. 90: Han Suyin, The Mountain is Young, 1958. Front cover. Source: Han Suyin, *The Mountain is Young* (Great Britain: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1958).

For the development of this enchanting imagery, the Western´s literary creations became especially relevant while accompanied with picturesque titles such as *Dreamland Nepal*, *Gold Pagodas and Silver Mountains*, *Fairyland of the Gods*, or *The Mountain is Young*. The latter a popular book written by Han Su Yin during her stay in the Royal Hotel in the decade of the 1950s.

This hotel was inaugurated in 1954 by Boris Lissanevich (1905-1985), a Russian expatriate and owner of the popular 300 Club in Calcutta, where the British elite and Indian maharajas used to gather before independence, and where Boris made good acquaintance with King Tribhuvan of Nepal. Just after restoring his power, the King invited Mr. Lissanevich to establish a hotel in an old Rana palace, as a first step in the promotion of tourism in the country of the Gods[196]. Hence, in March 1955 the first group of tourists arrived in Kathmandu Valley, staying at the Royal Hotel and purchasing all the local handicrafts and antiques displayed in its lobby[197].

It would not be until the 1960s when the tourist industry would start to be properly exploited by the local inhabitants, as a private initiative to make a living and attract foreign income into the country. According to this, Liechty highlights that while the first tourist guide of Nepal, the *Kathmandu Guide* written by Chandra Bahadur Shrestha in

[194] According to Liechty, the "seekers" were those who travelled into the mountains as a kind of spiritual journey. In Liechty, "Building the Road to Kathmandu."
[195] Anagarika Govinda, *The way of the White Clouds* (London: Overlook Books, 2005), 42.
[196] Victor Klenov, "From Odessa to Kathmandu," *The Britain-Nepal Society Journal*, 2000, 11-16.
[197] Liechty, *Far Out,* 39.

1956, presented "a limited grasp of what exactly tourists might be interested in, including in its pages lists of power plants and fire brigades along with hotels and sites to be seen", it was between 1960 and 1990 the international environment of Nepal experienced a boost through the opening of local hotels, travel agencies and tourist shops[198].

It would be from this time when the *citrakār* local painters started to increase the production of kitsch commercial paintings made with foreign techniques, such as oil and acrylic paintings, in order to sell these imageries of Nepal to the world. But in spite of the fact that these works were foremostly designed according to Western tastes, when analysing their aesthetical aspects the traditional training of these *citrakār* local painters in the skills of *paubhā* painting cannot be denied. For instance, in relation to the picturesque landscapes depicting the enchanting imaginary of the Himalaya, the tendency to use basic brilliant colours, as well as the lack of shadowy areas, should be highlighted as particular characteristics that these kitsch commercial paintings seem to share with the traditional aesthetics of the Nepalese *paubhā*.

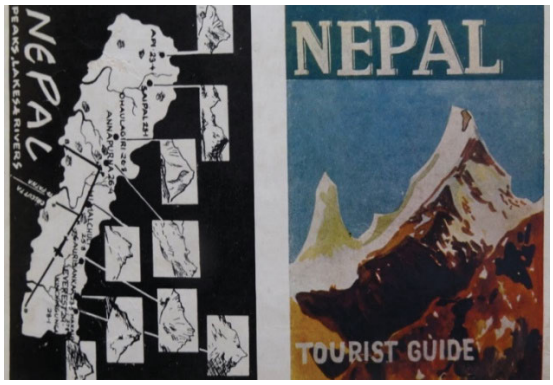

Fig. 91: Nepal tourist guide, c. 1960. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

According to Pal, in traditional art "the picture´s surface is always suffused with uniformly luminous hues. It was unnecessary for the artist to experiment with light and shade, since the divine world is regarded as perpetually effulgent"[199]. Likewise, these kitsch scenes are characterised by their flat backgrounds, with a slight sense of environmental perspective through the inclusion of trees or porters at the forefront of the canvass. Additional elements that, on the other hand, might also be considered as complements to the holy mountain. This is usually depicted in the centre of the composition, with its *divine* importance even more emphasized through the inclusion white clouds as a plinth at its base, and never concealing it.

[198] Ibid., 50.
[199] Pal, *The Arts of Nepal,* 65.

Fig. 92: Tourist shops at *Swayambhunāth*. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

At that same time, the local concern for the importance of preserving the Nepalese cultural heritage was raised among the educated sectors of the society, who not only appreciated such sources as effective tools for international income, but also as ways to represent the country´s unified identity. In an attempt to highlight the relevance of Nepalese art and its cultural preservation, in May 1951 the *Lalitpur Art & Crafts Exhibition* was organised by the *newār* art critic Satya Mohan Joshi (1920) in Patan´s Durbar square[200]. Here, a selection of paintings of the Valley´s ancient temples and architectural aspects depicted in the picturesque styles were presented by popular modern artists, such as Tej Bahadur Chitrakar or Keshava Duvadi (1921-1997). It was for this reason why at the time of King Mahendra´s official coronation in 1956, which was celebrated with "a combination of Victorian pomp and ceremony with inscrutable eastern rituals and exotic local people, set before the background of Kathmandu´s medieval architecture, blue sky and white Himalayan peaks", the *National Development Exhibition* was organised at Cottage Industries

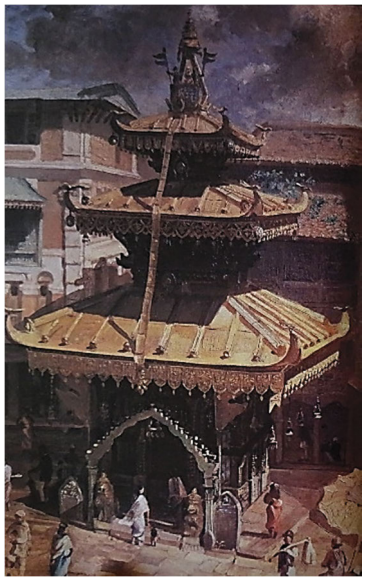

Fig. 93: Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, "Annapurna Temple," 1945. Oil. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. Icon of a Transition* (Kathmandu: Teba-Chi Studies Centre, 2004), 67.

[200] In 1952 Mr. Joshi launched the *Sachitra Kala Prakasan*, or "Art Publication with Paintings", written in both the Newari and Nepali languages. And a few years later the *Kalakar Trimasik*, merely focused on the enhancement of Newari. In Mukesh Malla, *The Spheres of Postmodern Arts*. Trans. Dr. Tara Lal Shrestha (Kathmandu: Academy of Fine Arts, 2015).

premises[201]. Here, Tej Bahadur Chitrakar presented a series of still-life's depicting the Buddhist items utilised in the ritual practice of the *newār*, as well as a selection of realistic paintings of the different holy places and temples within the Kathmandu Valley[202].

Fig. 94: King Mahendra browses Tej Bahadur Chitrakar´s catalogue, 1956. Oil. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. Icon of a Transition* (Kathmandu: Teba-Chi Studies Centre, 2004), 102.

Fig. 95: Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, "Wedding Ritual of Prince Siddhartha," 1956. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Art. Issues Miscellany* (Kathmandu: Teba-Chi Studies Centre, 2012), 146.

However, the most significant event for emphasising the traditional Newari culture as representative of Nepal to the outside world took place during the *Fourth World Buddhist Conference*. This conference was organised in November 1956, for the commemoration of the *Buddha Gayanti*, or 2.500 anniversary of Buddha´s death, and important members of the World Fellowship of Buddhist came from all over the world to Nepal. Through the whole ceremony the Himalayan country made a special effort to exhibit its rich Buddhist culture to the eyes of the foreign representatives[203]. Thus, besides a complete programme of conferences and talks given by renowned Buddhist leaders participating on the event, a huge art exhibition of traditional art was organised at the

[201] Liechty, *Far Out,* 39-43.
[202] Madan Chitrakar, *Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. Icon of a Transition* (Kathmandu: Teba-Chi Studies Centre, 2004). 102.
[203] *Report of the Fourth Buddhist Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists*, 1956, November 15-21, 9.

Hanuman Dhoka Palace, presenting a special selection of Buddhist sculptures in bronze, woodcarvings, *paubhā* and Thangka paintings, along with the performance of folk dances, dramas and songs.

Fig. 96: Chandra Man Singh Maskey, "Feeding Milk to Prince Siddhartha (later Lord Gautam Buddha) in meditation," 1956. Source: Madan Chitrakar, *Nepali Art. Issues Miscellany* (Kathmandu: Teba-Chi Studies Centre, 2012), 148.

Additionally, the Nepal Arts Society curated a small section of modern paintings based on the life of prince Siddhartha with a curious mixture of styles between the Western and Mughal styles, characteristic of late *paubhā* painting from the 18th century[204]. We can see another example of this style in both Chandra Man Singh Maskey and Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, whose narrative illustrations are to be analysed as the result between their previous education as Rana court painters, and the recent recognition of the Nepalese Mughal styles as more ideal ways to represent the country´s identity to the international world.

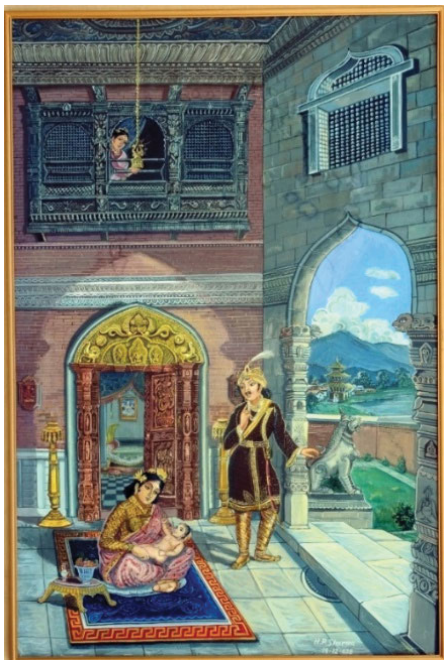

Fig. 97: Hari Prasad Sharma, "Prince Siddhartha with Princess Yasodhara," c. 1971. Acrylic on cardboard. Source: Photo courtesy of Hari Prashad Sharma, 2017.

[204] This Society was inaugurated in 1952 by Chandra Man Singh Maskey, as a congregation of modern artists in order to organise the portraiture of the Shah and relevant personalities. In Bhaukajee, "*Contemporary Paintings of Nepal*."

This was also the case of the painter Hari Prashad Sharma (1937), whose powerful combinations of tradition and modernity, history and imagination, diverge into nostalgic representations of the ancient Valley of *Nepāl*[205]. While narrating the history of Kathmandu and its people´s lifestyle during the Licchavi and Malla times, Sharma´s work becomes a faithful reflection of what would be considered to be a proper "Nepali" painting, or "Nepaliness", in the following years[206].

Fig. 98: Art exhibition and cultural show at the *Fourth World Buddhist Conference*, 1956. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

[205] *Art and Artists of Nepal on the eve of the Nepal Art Exhibition* (Kathmandu: Nepal Arts Society, 1956) catalogue of an exhibition on the occasion of the Fourth World Buddhist Conference, Kathmandu, November, 1956.

[206] Student of Juddha Kala Pathsala, until 1959 Hari Prashad received personal training by Chandra Man Singh Maskey or Jeevan Ratna Shakya (1920), a previous court painter and also pioneer in the mastering of the narrative pictorial skills.

5.2. Avant-garde experimentations during the 1950s in modern Nepal.

> "Abstract art reflects the rootedness and anarchic condition of modern man, lost in the anonymity of life and in the disorder of civilisation, though ceaseless experimentation in the intellectualised version of primitive art. Transcending the bondage of convention to emerge as a free spirit. It has a language of its own." Gehendra Man Amatya, 1966[207].

As Liechty states, the "tourist ghettos" in Nepal are to be seen as *trans-local* spaces where a complex interplay of mutual encounter developed through each other´s imagery[208]. Therefore, while on the one hand the picturesque outlook focuses on the representation of Nepal´s traditional heritage and the Himalaya, on the other a new generation of young Nepalese artists arose as pioneer creators in the process of transformation of such realistic tendencies, in favour of the experimentation with the avant-garde trends, which were adopted according to new democratic ideals and desires of freedom of expression imported in the Himalayan country since the fall of the Rana regime.

It has to be said that during the first stages of avant-garde development in the first Panchayat period the "Nepaliness" idea was still on a premature stage. Thus, the artworks created in this time were basically abstractions, with no indication of "Nepaliness" implicit in them. Some of the earliest examples in this sense are found in the cases of Vijay Thapa (1943), whose abstract works were presented at the *National Development Exhibition* organised for King Mahendra´s coronation[209]. Or also Gehendra Man Amatya (1937) whose original paintings were exhibited at the *Fourth World Buddhist Conference,* as part of the Nepal

Fig. 99: Vijay Thapa, c. 1970. Oil. © Collection of Vijay Thapa. Source: *Journey 16. Paintings by Vijay Thapa,* catalogue of an exhibition, 2008.

[207] Gehendra Man Amatya, "Abstract Art and Art Critic," *The Rising Nepal*, November 24, 1966.
[208] Izumi Morimoto, "The Development of Local Entrepreneurship: a Case Study of a Tourist Area, Thamel in Kathmandu," in *Nepalis Inside and Outside Nepal. Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia*, ed. H. Ishii et al. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1967).
[209] Before heading to the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) so as to complete his Fine Arts studies in 1965, Vijay Thapa was already a referential painter in Nepalese modern art history as he was chosen to be the private teacher to Prince Birendra, who was a great supporter of the new avant-garde styles in his Kingdom. In Vijay Thapa, personal communication with the author, May 2, 2015.

Arts Society event of modern art. Credited for being the first Nepalese artist to experiment with the avant-garde techniques, the first time he became acquainted with the abstract styles was during his youth as a student of Chandra Man Singh Maskey. It was during in period when this artist discovered a Western art magazine at the American Library, where the works of popular modern artists, such as Jackson Pollock, were reproduced[210]. Something very likely as, according to Liechty, in the 1950s the eighty per cent of the travellers came from United States[211].

Nevertheless, Amatya would not start experimenting with the abstract trends until he was introduced to this innovative techniques by a foreign artist named Nicolai Michoutouchkine (1929-2010). Born in Paris amongst a Russian family of expatriates, Michoutouchkine was one of these extravagant spiritual "seekers" who were visiting the Himalayan country in those days. As an avant-garde painter and Buddhist practitioner, he was an admirer of the Asian cultures thus, once he finished his studies at the Grande Chaumiére School of Art in Paris, Michoutouchkine started a pilgrimage towards the eastern part of the world, in order to find new inspirations for his creative career.

After two years travelling through the Middle East, in August 1955 Nicolai exhibited in New Delhi a series of impressionist paintings inspired by Buddha´s life[212]. It was during this show when Michoutouchkine became acquainted with Elisabeth Brunner (1920-2001), a Hungarian painter who had arrived in India in the 1930s in order to receive her art education at *Śāntiniketan*. Since this event coincided with the preparations of the *Buddha Jayanti´*s cultural celebrations, Mrs. Brunner took the initiative of taking him to the main pilgrimage sites of northern India and Nepal in order to depict the emblematic places where Siddhartha preached the holy dharma[213].

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[210] Gehendra Man Amatya, personal communication with the author, March 15, 2015.

[211] Liechty, "Building the Road to Kathmandu," 20.

[212] This show took place at the Embassies of France and the United States simultaneously. It was attended by important people such as Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi who, according to the artist, "…really seemed to appreciate my gouaches". In Marie Claude Teissier-Landgraf, *The Russian from Belfort. 37 years journey by painter Nicolai Michoutouchkine in Oceania* (Vanuatu: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1995), 51.

[213] Committed as they were in their duty to show the wonders of South Asia to the rest of the world, both painters organised several exhibitions in different places around India, being their last show together curated by the All Indian Fine Arts and Crafts Society in northern Sikkim, on November 27, 1956. In Géza Bethlenfalvy, introduction to *A Painter´s Pilgrimage. Elisabeth Brunner´s Buddhist Paintings from India, Nepal, Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand* (New Delhi: Hungarian Information & Cultural Centre, 1978), 14-18.

Fig. 100: "De Paris a Noumeá, 1953-1957." Map of travels of Nicolai Michoutouchkine. © Pacific Art. Source: Photo courtesy of Suluo Daunivalu, FRSA (London), 2015.

Fig. 101: Nicolai Michoutouchkine´s art work, c. 1956. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

It was during this period when Nicolai´s painting show was organised in the capital of Kathmandu, inaugurated in January 1956 by King Mahendra himself at the Nepal- Bharat Sankritik Kendra, or the "Indo-Nepali Cultural Centre". According to the artist, this exhibition was a big success that attracted Nepalese and Tibetan visitors who came from the Himalaya, to take part in the Buddha Jayanti´s religious celebrations only a few months later[214]. Among the personalities invited to the inauguration of Michoutouchkine´s painting show, the figure of Chandra Man Singh Maskey has to be highlighted. Due to his fidelity to King Tribhuvan during the monarch´s struggle for the restoration of his power in Nepal, he had been appointed to a number of important posts, including the jobs of Curator of the Nepal National Museum, Director of the Archaeological Department, and even Manager of the National Zoo. Apparently, Maskey introduced this foreign

[214] Teissier-Landgraf, *The Russian from Belfort,* 18.

artist to Gehendra Man Amatya, asking him to give some lessons on abstract painting to his pupil, before carrying on his trip towards the Pacific Islands[215]. Thus, for a few weeks, the Russian artist would instruct Amatya in the technique of abstract painting at the Royal Hotel, along with Inger Lissanevich (1927-2013), wife of Boris, who happened to be an amateur landscapist.

In February 1956, the ambassador of India Mr. Bhagawan Sahaya inaugurated Gehendra Man Amatya´s first art exhibition at the Nepal-Bharat Sankritik Kendra[216]. In this historical event, the artist presented a series of random experimentations of avant-garde works painted over cardboard, oscillating between Jackson Pollock´s dripping technique and Picasso´s cubist styles. These paintings were particularly characterised by the use of red, white and black in plain tones. But also brilliant colours and lack of shadows, thick strong lines to mark the figure´s shapes, and a technique based on the superposition of different layers of acrylic.

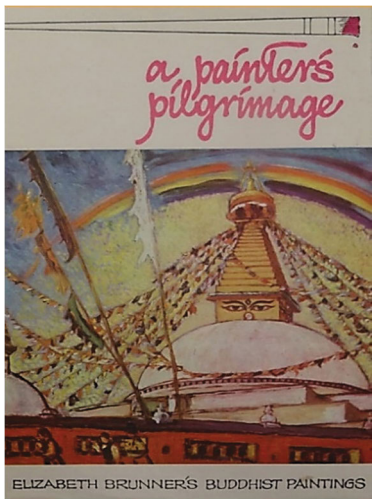


Fig. 102: Elisabeth Brunner, "*Boudhanath*." Source: G. Bethlenfalvy, *A Painter´s Pilgrimage. Elisabeth Brunner´s Buddhist Paintings from India, Nepal, Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand* (New Delhi: Hungarian Information & Cultural Centre, 1978), front cover.

Fig. 103: Gehendra Man Amatya, c. 1956. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

[215] Here Nicolai would remain until the end of his life. In Kumudini Hettiarachchi, "Two artists, different destinations and one passion," *The Sunday Times,* March 7, 2010, accessed April 29, 2015, http://www.sundaytimes.lk/100307

[216] Gehendra Man Amatya, "Nicolai and My First Modern Solo Exhibition. *Art Perspective Weekly* 1, no. 7 (2014)" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha, Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

Fig. 104: Gehendra Man Amatya, c. 1956. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

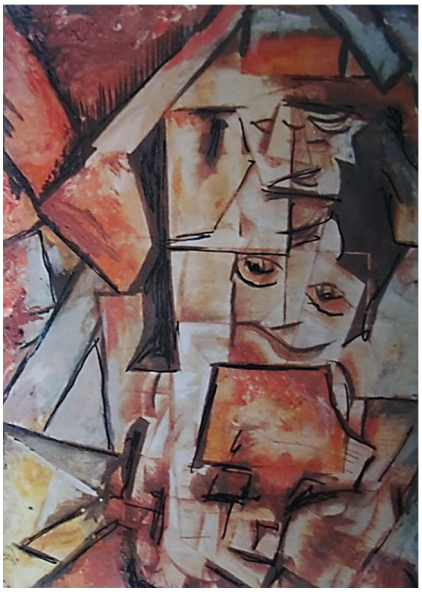


Fig. 105: Gehendra Man Amatya, c. 1956. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

Fig. 106: Gehendra Man Amatya, "Collection of Masks," 1959. Watercolour. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2017.

In spite of this amalgam of creative tendencies, it has to be said that Amatya´s early paintings were already characterised by a violent style that preceded the artist´s work during the Panchayat period. Indeed, only a few years later, his works diverted into particular interpretations of tortured human bodies or animals, apparently inspired in the ritualistic sacrifices that still take place in special festivities in the Valley[217]. A violent environment that can be clearly appreciated in the following series of figurative still-lifes, presented by the artist at the *Exhibition of Paintings by Nepali Artists* at American Library of Kathmandu in 1960[218].

[217] Gehendra Man Amatya, personal communication with the author, March 15, 2015.

[218] This show was organised by Satya Mohan Joshi in collaboration with Ambica Shrestha, along with other painters among whom Chandra Man Singh Maskey, Amar Chitrakar and Kalidash Shrestha were chosen. In *An Exhibition of Paintings by Nepali Artists* (Kathmandu: USIS Nepal, 1960) catalogue of an exhibition at The American Library, Kathmandu, October 28 through November 7, 1960.

Fig. 107: Gehendra Man Amatya, "Still-life," 1959. Watercolour. © Collection of Ton Son Kim. Source: Photo courtesy of the collector, 2017.

Possibly influenced by his mentor, Chandra Man Singh Maskey, it is important to state that Amatya seemed to have an obscure tendency to depict violent cartoons in a metaphorical style since the early stages of his creative career. Such as we can see in the following example, an elaborated watercolour of a cat eating a goose´s ankle, while a dog barks behind a closed door. And which also denoted Amatya´s outstanding skills in the realistic style. Indeed, even if the reasons behind such illustration have not been openly clarified by the artist, the instability of the political situation generated during the 1950s transitional times seems to have been motive enough that led polemical Amatya to represent the situation through the ironical liberty implicit in the metaphorical cartoon.

Fig. 108: Gehendra Man Amatya, c. 1954. Watercolour on cardboard. © Collection of Ton Son Kim. Source: Photo courtesy of the collector, 2017.

Accordingly, it has to be said that besides the picturesque tendency, Maskey´s parallel aspect as a cartoon designer should not be ignored as pioneer works in the field of political art and criticism through the power of visual media. This is demonstrated in the following picture, dated of the 1940s, where the artist depicts the Rana rulers as street dogs that run away from King Tribhuvan, represented as an elephant blowing away the Ranas´ crown. Besides, according to the rumours, during the times of Juddha Shumshere Rana an anonymous drawing was found in the maharaja´s palace, in which the Prime Minister was portrayed as an ogre devouring human beings. Since in such period Maskey was employed as an art teacher at Durbar High School, he was the one blamed as the author of the offence, and condemned to prison for eighteen long years[219]. Nevertheless, due to political changes and particular interests, the majority of these early

[219] David K. Barker, "Maskey, Premier Artist of Nepal. Part One".

cartoons have been destroyed or lost in time, being these political drawings unique artworks in the early field of cartoon design in Nepal.

Fig. 109: Chandra Man Singh Maskey, c. 1940. Cartoon. © Collection of Santosh Man Maskey. Source: Photo courtesy of Santosh Man Maskey, 2017.

5.3. The performative process of becoming modern artist: a critical analysis.

Even though the experimental abstract trends adopted by Amatya should be appreciated as a pioneering step in the development of the avant-garde trends in Nepalese art, this work states the need to analyse his performance as "the first modern artist of Nepal", as a relevant aspect to be comprehended within his own creative work. For instance, when establishing a closer analysis on certain aspects of Amatya´s modern abstractions, the performative aspects implicit in his process of making art are evidenced when observing that many of the photographed reproductions of his early paintings seem to have suffered late changes and modifications, adding new elements with black marker over its original forms or even changing signatures or dates according to the artist´s will. We can see an example of such extravagant attitude in the following photograph, a unique image of his first solo art exhibition at the Nepal-Bharat Sankritik Kendra in 1956, where

the artist seems to have done slight modifications with black marker on some of the paintings located on the top of the picture.

Fig. 110: Gehendra Man Amatya´s first art exhibition at the Nepal-Bharat Sankritik Kendra, 1956. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

This performative idea may also be appreciated in Amatya´s second art exhibition, which took place in November 1956 at Asan´s Military House in Kathmandu. In this event, entitled *200 Days Painting Exhibition*, the artist showed a considerable number of small abstract works organised around the gallery in a chaotic style, thus more focused on the painter´s recognition as a modern artist, than in the aesthetical result of his art work. It is with this regard how the present work states that, in the case of Nepal, the performance of the modern artist should be analysed as something even more important than the work of art. This theatrical attitude that must be understood as a derivation of the acknowledgement of the artist, in contrast to the anonymous figure of the artisan, according to the new times. In other words, as well as in ancient times the figure of the artist was renowned only in the case of the court painters and masters of the art of royal portraiture, since the 1950s the meaning of this figure started to be also applied to those capable of using the avant-garde techniques, which soon became trend among the country´s elites.

Fig. 111: Gehendra Man Amatya´s, *200 Days Painting Exhibition* at Asson Military House, 1956. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

Accordingly, in the 1960s *Exhibition of Paintings by Nepali Artists* at the American Library, an amalgam of different avant-garde styles were presented. This was partly a consequence of the experimental attitudes initially fomented by Gehendra Man Amatya, but also by other painters who gradually came back to Nepal after receiving their training at the universities of India. For instance, as the first Nepalese painter to attend art studies at the Sir J.J. School of Arts in Mumbai, Keshava Duvadi presented a series of paintings that were significantly influenced by the Bengal School of Art[220]. This is reflected in his beautiful watercolour "Coconut Day in Bombay", in which the artist adopted a particular drawing style very similar to the one of the famous Indian painter Nanda Lal Bose (1882-1966)[221].

Fig. 112: Keshava Duvadi, "Coconut Day," 1946. Watercolour. © Keshava Duvadi Art Museum. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

Another case is that of Urmila Upadayay Garg (1939), who also participated at the American Library modern art exhibition after her period as a student at the Sir J.J. School of Art. Renowned as the "First modern women artist of

[220] With strong legacies of European as well as Indian art techniques, this was a relevant institution established by the British in 1878, and where from the 1950s onwards a significant number of pioneering Nepalese modern artists received their formal studies while being influenced by the avant-garde painting styles of the nationalists of India in those times. In Sir JJ School of Arts. "About JJ." Accessed March 3, 2017, http://www.sirjjschoolofart.in/about-us/about-jj.aspx

[221] Nanda Lal Bose was a key figure in India´s modern creativity, and the imaginary of Ajanta caves. In Fernández del Campo, *El Arte de India,* 383.

Nepal", Urmila was the protagonist of the second exhibition of abstract painting ever made by a Nepalese artist in Kathmandu. According to her, this show was inaugurated by Prime Minister B.P. Koirala at the Nepal-Bharat Sankritik Kendra in 1959, consisted of a series of yellow and orange paintings inspired by her travels around South India and Darjeeling´s markets. However, none of these artworks are available for view as all her early paintings were purchased by King Mahendra[222].

Fig. 113: Urmila Upadhaya Garg, "Composition en Bleu et Rouge." Oil on canvas. Source: Alba-Avis Gallery, accessed April 1, 2017, http://www.alba-avis.com/artist.html

Only a few years later Urmila would be offered a French Government Scholarship to study etching at Mr. William Hayter´s atelier at L´Ecole des Beaux Arts, after which she moved to Canada where she produced most of her works while teaching etching at the University of Alberta[223]. Here, Urmila´s work will develop while translating the ancient Nepalese abstract symbols into new styles of painting, according to the "neo-tantric" forms of art that will emerge in Nepal from the 1970s onwards. Nevertheless, in spite of her brilliant career as an abstract etcher, after the fall of the Panchayat regime Urmila ended up abandoning her creative work so as to devote herself to her current activities in social work in Kathmandu.

Fig. 114: Urmila Upadhaya Garg. Ilustration for the calendar of the Heavy Equipement Entrepreneurs Association of Nepal, 2014. Source: Courtesy of Urmila Upadhaya Garg, 2015.

Another of the earliest experimental painters of Nepal during the 1950s is Uttam Prashad Karmacharya (1937), better known as Uttam "Nepali". This artist collaborated in the American Library´s modern art exhibition with a two of semi-expressionist portraits entitled "My Sister" and "Chandra Man Singh Maskey", and also developing his style

[222] Urmila Uphadhayay Garg, personal communication with the author, April 22, 2015.
[223] S. B. Neupane, "Urmila Garg And Her Graphic Works. Art Exhibition," *The Rising Nepal*, September 9, 1977, 3.

Fig. 115: Uttam Nepali, "Chandra Man Singh Maskey," 1960. Oil on cardboard. Source: Photo courtesy of Uttam Nepali, 2017

towards the "neo-tantric" idealisms in later stages of his career. After his period as a student in Lucknow, India, Uttam Nepali organised his first solo exhibition at Saraswoti Sadan in 1962. Significantly inaugurated by King Mahendra, this event was characterised by a mixture of all kinds of creative styles, ranging from the formal portraits of Western painters, such as Rembrandt and Matisse, to picturesque landscapes and mythological works, some of them also evocative of the Bengal School of Art[224]. In this case, the performative aspects of the Nepalese cultural background must be highlighted here with regard to the public´s particular response when interacting with some of Uttam Nepali´s original pieces, and in particular those representing the Gods of Nepal in a modernised style. Accordingly, Per Meyer points out the interesting behaviour of the local visitors to the show while making pujas in front of the painting "Dancing Ganesh", exhibited at Uttam´s solo show at the Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA) in 1966[225].

Fig. 116: Uttam Nepali, "Ganesh," 1962. Watercolour on paper. Source: Photo courtesy of Uttam Nepali, 2015.

Consequently, and unveiling the apparent division between the concepts of decorative and ritualistic art in the case of Nepal, this work states that the rise of modern aesthetics in this country must be analysed according to the Nepalese traditional culture and its ceremonial aspects, where the religious temple, sculpture or painting, is considered to be a mere tool to be used for worship of a divine during the ritual. In other words, as well as in ancient Nepal the piece of art is always complemented by a set of performative acts, it is highlighted how both the process of becoming modern artist of Nepal and the ritualistic practices developed around the modern art exhibition are to be taken into account as complementary aspects, even more relevant than the piece of art itself.

[224] *Uttam Nepali. Celebrating 46 Years of Creativity*, (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2004), catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, March 21 through April 7, 2004, 4.
[225] Per Meyer, "Uttam Nepali´s Exhibition of Modern Paintings," *The Rising Nepal*, January 24, 1966, 3.

6. Dwellers of the Himalaya. “Bangdel´s era” and the onset of the Panchayat.

In spite of the fact that the 1950s period was the time when the first Nepalese experimentations with the avant-garde trends started to occur, the official onset of modern art would not take place until 1962, following the arrival of the modern painter Lain Singh Bangdel (1919-2002) and his popular retrospective at Sawaswati Sadan´s hall between April and May[226]. Displaying a series of abstract and impressionist paintings reflecting the “Nepaliness” idea, this exhibition was symbolically inaugurated by King Mahendra himself, after inviting the artist to come to Nepal with the aim of conducting development of modern art according to the Panchayat ideals, which were officially established in the same year. Therefore, the figure of Bangdel, born in Darjeeling, was symbolically chosen by King Mahendra as a way to represent the Himalaya as a united kingdom beyond its political frontiers, as well as the “Nepaliness” idea was emphasized towards the idea of belonging to Greater Nepal, or *Gorkhārajya*, as a reminiscent of the Kingdom of the Himalaya as an independent nation-state.

Fig. 117: Lain Singh Bangdel first art exhibition at Saraswoti Sadan, 1962. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

[226] Dina Bangdel and Don Messerschmidt, *Against the Current. The Life of Lain Singh Bangdel. Writer, Painter and Art Historian of Nepal* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2004), 162.

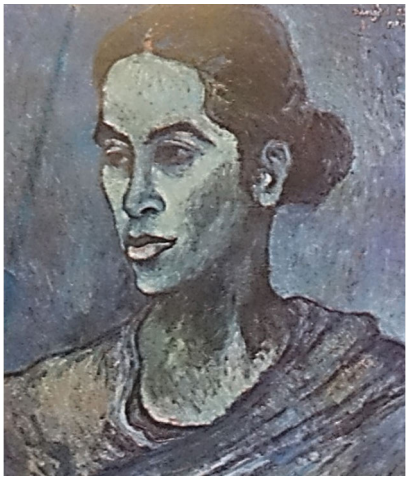


Fig. 118: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Artist´s Wife," 1955. Oil on canvas. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991), image 19.

Nevertheless, at the same time as this chapter focuses on the historical aspects of Lain Singh Bangdel as a foremost important artist at the onset of the Panchayat regime, it does so while adventuring the hypothesis that his modern art works are to be analysed not only as representative paintings of the "Nepaliness" idea, but also as metaphorical criticisms against the political situation generated since the 1960s under the Panchayat "democracy". As in spite of the appearances of Bangdel as a faithful follower of King Mahendra´s policies, the following chapter points out to the contradictions between the performative aspects of his figure as a modern artist, and the ironical scenes depicted in his early semi-abstract paintings, or in his later works inspired by the sharp Himalayan imagery.

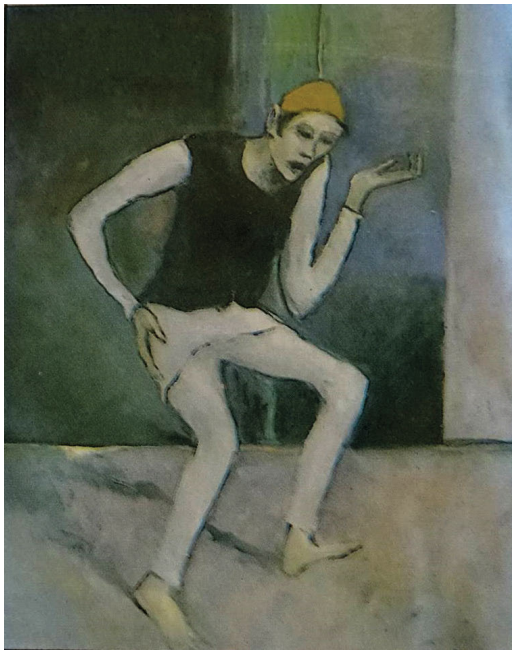
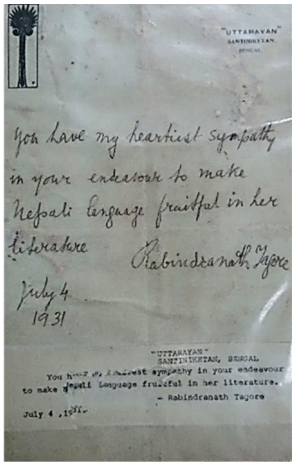


Fig. 119: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Actor," c. 1958. Oil on canvas. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991), image 38.

6.1. In search of an identity. India´s national influences from the district of Darjeeling.

When speaking about the revolutionary process against the Rana rule in exile, the area of Darjeeling has to be taken into account as a source from where the "Nepaliness" national frame in modern art started to develop. In order to enhance their national feelings attached to Mother Nepal, the Nepalese inhabitants of the Darjeeling´s hills started to use the arts of poetry and literature in Nepali language as a way of claiming their condition of "belonging to the Himalaya".

Particularly relevant in its literary context was the establishment of the cultural organisation Nepali Sahitya Sammelan in 1915, from where a number of local poets and littérateurs requested the official establishment of Nepali language at the public schools of the area, and even counting on the support of the nationalistic poet and painter Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), who was fond of the individual fight pursued by the modern artists in Darjeeling. This is stated in a letter that he sent to the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan in July 1931, where he wrote: "You have my heartiest sympathy in your endeavour to make Nepali language fruitful in her literature"[227].


"UTTARAYAN"
SANTINIKETAN,
BENGAL

You have my heartiest sympathy in your endeavour to make Nepali language fruitful in her literature.

Rabindranath Tagore

July 4, 1931.

Fig. 130: Congratulations letter of Rabindranath Tagore to the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, 1931. Source: Courtesy of the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, 2015.

Rabindranath Tagore was an icon of the development of modern art in India during the country´s fight for independence, as he was the one who promoted the "Indianess" idea through the establishment of the Visva-Bharati University at *Śāntiniketan*. This was particularly enhanced by the reinterpretation of the "primitive" and folk styles of painting characteristic of the rural areas, marking a new hybrid path of development between Indian tradition and Western modernity, that will be followed by relevant artists such as Amrita Sher Gil (1913-1941) or Jamini Roy (1887-1972)[228].

[227] Rabindranath Tagore, personal communication with the members of the Nepali Saitya Sammelan by letter, July 4, 1931.

[228] Sergio Román Aliste, "Dimensiones artísticas en la pedagogía de *Śāntiniketan*: un proyecto internacional en el medio rural bengalí (1910-1951)" (PhD diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2015).

In 1922 Rabindranath Tagore organised an exhibition of La Bauhaus avant-garde artists in Calcutta, during the times when Chandra Man Singh Maskey and Tej Bahadur Chitrakar where being trained at the Government School of Art[229]. But in spite of its relevance in the international scene, both Nepalese artists seemed to have been oblivious to such an historical event, focused as they were on learning the British styles of portraiture imposed by the Rana regime in Nepal. For this reason, the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan literary fight against the Rana autocracy was significant as, in the end, it was somehow established as a complement to India´s cultural movement against the British Empire[230].

Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that at the same time as the dwellers of the Himalaya fought in favour of the restoration of King Tribhuvan (a descendant of Prithvi Narayan Shah, the unifier of *Gorkhārajya*) this national movement attempted to become independent from the one happening in India. With this regard, Hutt explains how while in ancient times Nepali poetry was created according to the Sanskrit norms, since the 1920s pioneer writers such as Laxmi Prasad Devkota (1909-1959), began to experiment with the rhythmic aspects of Nepalese folk songs, breaking away from the classical conventions in favour of re-defining a proper Nepalese identity in modern art[231].

Besides, the Nepalese movement in Darjeeling aimed to build its national identity according to the idea of a "unified Himalayan culture" that could never be contaminated by foreignness, nor invaded by the British Empire. However, due to the latest issues of "tribalisation" and "regionalisation" happening in the different parts of the mountain range nowadays, a micro-national movement has been raised in the Darjeeling area as a distinct ethnic and linguistic group separated from India, but also from Nepal[232]. Despite the fact that this question falls out of the chronological context of this present work, this has to be taken into account in order to understand the current issues regarding the right of the Darjeeling artists to be considered Nepalese, such as is the polemical case of Lain Singh Bangdel.

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[229] Mitter, *Indian Art,* 196.

[230] As soon as he arrived in Kathmandu, Bangdel would be commissioned to paint a portrait of Rabindranath Tagore, which was used to preside the Royal Nepal Academy´s hall at Tagore´s centenary. This portrait is today somewhere at Chhauni National Art Museum´s store room. In Bangdel and Messerschmidt, *Against the Current,* 164.

[231] Hutt, *Himalayan Voices*, 18-19.

[232] Curiously, now the links between Darjeeling and Nepal have weakened to such an extent that the writers are being placed into the different categories of "Darjeeling poets" and "Kathmandu poets". In Hutt, *Himalayan Voices*, 16.

Fig. 131: Bangdel in London. Source: Lain Singh Bangdel, "*When Outside the Country*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2015." (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

The figure of Bangdel may be well considered as one of the most important modern artists from Greater Nepal, or the Kingdom of the Himalaya, during the Panchayat period. Born in an exiled Nepalese family from Darjeeling, his literary works used to depict tragic scenarios, in a time when social literature was starting to arise as a way to complain against the political situation of his country. For instance, in his book *Langara Ko Sathi*, or "The Cripples Friend", published in 1951, the feelings of the writer in relation to the difficulties that the Nepalese had to endure during the Rana period were metaphorically reflected through this ironical novel based on the friendship of a beggar with his dog. Also, during his period as a student of fine arts in the Government School of Art at Calcutta around 1947, Bangdel made important publications with national titles such as his *Muluk Bhaira Ma*, or "Outside the Country", published in 1948 as an account of the life of the Nepalese living in Indian territory, or *Maithighar*, or "Maternal Home", published a year later in 1949, as the history of an individual´s natural desires and freedom constrained by the social norms[233].

Particularly characterised by using romantic features in his writing style, Bangdel´s literary works always referred to Nepal as his home country, while describing the Himalayan outstanding mountain imageries in poetic ways. In such sense, while *Muluk*

[233] Kumar Pradhan, *A History of Nepali Literature* (Darjeeling: Sahitya Akademy, 1984), 172.

Bhaira Ma starts with the sunrise above the Himalayan peaks, *Langara Ko Sathi* commence by describing a cold winter morning in Darjeeling.

Fig. 132: First meeting of Bangdel with Bal Krishna Sama in Darjeeling, 1948. Source: Lain Singh Bangdel, "*When Outside the Country*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2015." (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

But even if this artist´s contribution to the literary scene of Nepal has been remarkable, this chapter is mainly focused on the analysis of his facet as a visual artist during the transition and Panchayat times, while following up with the main subject of the present research overall. It was during the same year of *Muluk Bhaira Ma´*s successful publication when Lain Singh Bangdel became acquainted with Bal Krishna Sama in Calcutta, and praised him by painting his portrait. Due to the publication of such portrait in the literary magazine *Prabhat* the Nepalese ambassador in Great Britain since 1947, General Kaiser Shumshere Rana (1892-1964), became aware of Bangdel´s painting skills and decided to give him a small stipend to encourage his training at L´École des Beaux Arts in Paris, where Bangdel painted his portrait as a form of gratitude[234].

Once his fine arts studies were completed, Bangdel was personally invited by King Mahendra to lead the creative movement of Nepal towards the "Nepaliness" idealisms, according to the Panchayat´s patriotic aims to modernise the country while sticking to its traditional roots. Soon after his arrival in the capital of Nepal, Bangdel was accepted as a member of the Royal Nepal Academy (RNA), which had been established by King Mahendra in 1957 as a national enterprise devoted to the promotion of modern literary arts in the Kingdom of the Himalaya and where a

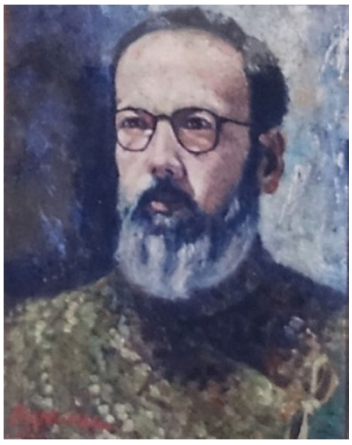


Fig. 133: Lain Singh Bandgel, "Portrait of Bal Krishna Sama," c. 1950. Source: Photo courtesy of Jeevan SJB Rana, 2015.

[234] This was one of the works exhibited at Bangdel´s first solo art exhibition at the Foyer d´Entre´Aide aux Artistes at boulevard du Montparnasse in 1954.

significant number of well-known litterateurs from Darjeeling´s hills were included.

Fully supported by the Royal House, in later stages of his paining career Bangdel would become one of the most relevant artists during the whole Panchayat period, uplifting his position in the scene after his official appointment in important jobs such as the Chancellorship of the RNA in 1984, from where this painter leaded the creative development of the country until his volunteer resign in 1989.

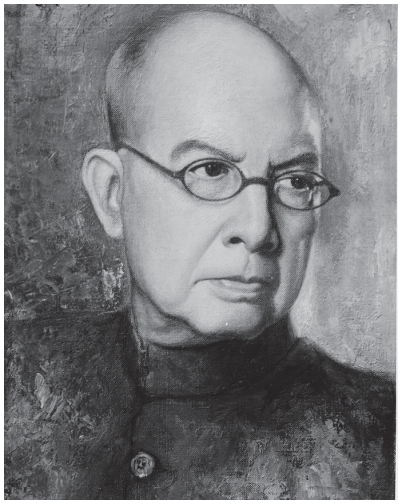
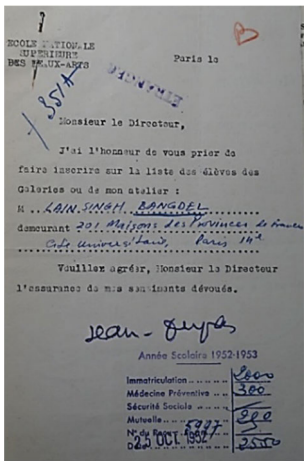


Fig. 134: Marc Vaux, "Lain Singh Bangdel art work," portrait of General Kaiser, c. 1950. Photograph. © Centre Pompidou – MNAM/CCI – Bibliothèque Kandinsky-Fonds Marc Vaux. Source: Photo courtesy of Valerie Juilliard, Centre Pompidou, 2018.

6.2. From the "primitivism" to the *Picasso-manqué* syndrome. Lain Singh Bangdel "outside the country".

In February 2, 1952, Lain Singh Bangdel headed towards European lands so as to start with his career as a modern painter at the L'École des Beaux Arts in Paris. As a prestigious institution among India´s modern art scene, this was the place where relevant artists of the moment, such as Amrita Sher Gil, had received their formal education before turning into worldwide famous artists. Owing to its popularity and the sheer amount of applications received every year, the School´s selection process was very restrictive. However, those students who were not admitted inside it, he could still receive unofficial

art lessons at the institution's ateliers. This was the case of Lain Singh Bangdel who, after been rejected at L'École´ official premises, he was allowed to study at at Mr. Jean Dupas Leugueult´s private hall, where he would be trained in modern painting until 1956.



Monsieur le Directeur,

J'ai l'honneur de vous prier de faire inscrire sur la liste des élèves des Galeries ou de mon atelier :

M ..LAIN.SINGH..BANGDEL.....

demeurant 201 Maison des Etudiants de France Cité Universitaire, Paris 14e

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Directeur l'assurance de mes sentiments dévoués.

jean-dupas

Année Scolaire 1952-1953

Immatriculation 300
Médecine Préventive 900
Sécurité Sociale 2500
Mutuelle .....
N° de Reçu 5977
Date 25 OCT. 1952

Fig. 135: Lain Singh Bangdel´s admission form at Jean Dupas atelier, 1952-53. Source: National Archives, Paris.

During his time as a student in Paris, Bangdel coincided with relevant artists of the post-colonial art movement in India, such as some of the members of the well-renowned Progressive Artist Group R.H. Raza, Souza, Hussain or Paritosh Sen, who were also studying art at L'École Des Beaux Arts in those times[235]. Particularly, the figure of Zainzul Abedin (1914-1976) should be emphasized as he had been one of Bangdel´s teachers at the Government School of Art in Calcutta, and whose impressive sketches of the Bengali people´s pain during the Famine of Bengal in 1943, left a huge impression on Bangdel´s painting style[236]. Therefore, during his last year as a student at Mr. Leugueult´s atelier, Bangdel produced his "Famine of Bengal", where the suffering of a Bengali mother in Calcutta´s main streets was represented in a "primitive" drawing style, using dark blue tonalities and emphasizing of the unbearable pain of this mother after watching her own child starve to death.

Fig. 136: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Famine of Bengal," 1956-59. Oil on canvas. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991), image 4.

[235] Ibid., 62. Formed in Calcutta as early as in 1945, after the consequences that the aftermaths of Second World War, this group has been historically renowned as one of the first creative collectives of India´s modern art scenario.

[236] Mitter, *Indian Art*, 199.

During his academic years at L'École Des Beaux Arts, Bangdel´s paintings were exhibited in several occasions in the pioneer galleries of the post war period. His first solo exhibition took place in the Foyer d´Entre´Aide aux Artistes at Boulevard du Montparnasse, in December 1954[237]. This was leading institution opened by the photographer Marc Vaux (1895-1971) in 1946, and where the emerging modern artists of that time could organise their shows with the aim of encouraging the development of creative arts in Paris[238].

Fig. 137: Marc Vaux, "Lain Singh Bangdel art work," c. 1950. Photograph. © Centre Pompidou – MNAM/CCI – Bibliothèque Kandinsky-Fonds Marc Vaux. Source: Photo courtesy of Valerie Juilliard, Centre Pompidou, 2018.

Fig. 138: Marc Vaux, "Lain Singh Bangdel art work," c. 1950. Photograph. © Centre Pompidou – MNAM/CCI – Bibliothèque Kandinsky-Fonds Marc Vaux. Source: Photo courtesy of Valerie Juilliard, Centre Pompidou, 2018.

It was after the success of this event when Lain Singh Bangdel got the opportunity to exhibit the same series of works at the prestigious Galerie Sonnenhalde in Stuttgart, Germany, and whose owner, Mr. Hugo Borst (1887-1967), was acknowledged as a visionary who foresaw and boosted the avant-garde movement in post war Europe. Bangdel´s exhibition, which took place on March 5, 1955, was one of the first

[237] Ibid., 360.

[238] "Biographie Marc Vaux," Villa Vassilieff, accessed April 10, 2018, http://www.villavassilieff.net/?Biographie-Marc-Vaux

shows at the Galerie, and it was financed by the Indian Institute of Munich in collaboration with C. Krishna Gairola (died 2003)[239].

It is very likely that the same series of paintings was exhibited in Bangdel´s next exhibition at the Club des 4 Vents in Paris, in November 14-28, 1955. But besides the following brochure published in Bangdel´s monograph *Muluk Bhaira Ma*, no information seems to be available concerning the later event. However, thanks to the article that Mr. Gairola wrote in *Marg*, an Indian magazine, about Bangdel´s exhibition at the Galerie Sonnenhalde, we can grasp precise information not only about the organisation of Lain Singh Bangdel´s exhibition in Stuttgart, but also the characteristics of the paintings exhibited.

Fig. 139: Lain Singh Bangdel, "A woman with a child at work," c. 1950. Source: C. Krishna Gairola, "Lain Singh Bangdel," *Marg: A Magazine of the Arts* 10*,* no. 1 (1955): 38.

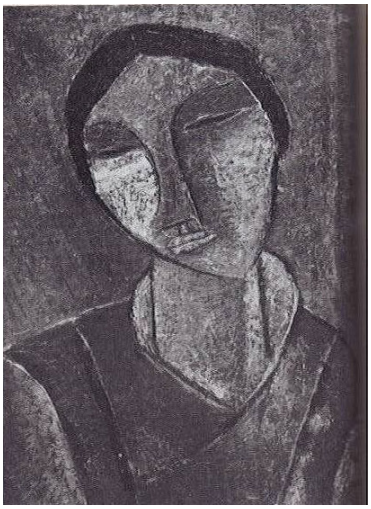


Fig. 140: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Portrait of a Tibetan woman," c. 1950. Source: C. Krishna Gairola, "Lain Singh Bangdel," *Marg: A Magazine of the Arts* 10*,* no. 1 (1955): 36.

Apparently, Bangdel´s early art works were particularly focused on the depiction of Nepalese women doing different works. He seems to have been influenced by the art developed by the Progressive Artist Group in those times, applying an insistent use of black thick lines to demark the figure´s contours and use of colours in a flat way, but also with a *primitive* style very similar to the one of Picasso, Gaugin or Mondigliani[240]. According this, Mitter states that modernism is a phenomenon that has

[239] Kajta Förster, "Der Kunstliebhaber Hugo Borst," in *Hugo Borst 1881-1967*, ed. Selbstverlag (Stuttgart, 2011), 60.

[240] C. Krishna Gairola, "Lain Singh Bangdel," *Marg: A Magazine of the Arts* 10*,* no. 1 (1955): 36-37.

to be called the *Picasso-manqué* syndrome, as most of the artists emerging from there are very often compared to the figure of Picasso, stating that "behind this seemingly innocent conclusion, rest the whole weight of Western art society" [241]. Indeed, as well as many other artists in that times, Bangdel professed a deep admiration for Picasso as a revolutionary painter.

It would be this passion what led him to travel to Spain in order to visit the artist´s hometown in Malaga, and to write his novel *Spainko Samjana*, or "Memories of Spain", presenting romantic recounts of his deep impressions about Spanish art and the beauty of the Mediterranean Sea with its deep blue colour, and even comparing the Himalaya with the Spanish hills[242].

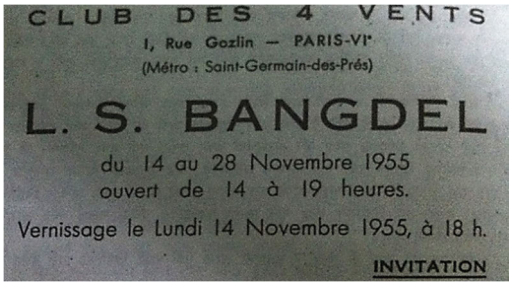


Fig. 141: Invitation for an exhibition in Paris, 1955. Source: Lain Singh Bangdel, "*When Outside the Country*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2015." (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

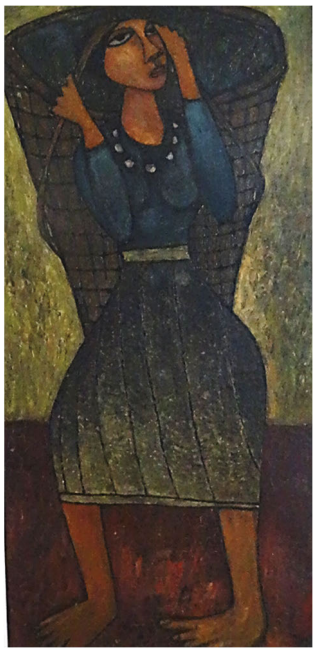


Fig. 142: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Beginning of the Day," c. 1950. © Collection of Dina Bangdel. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

With this scenario in mind, Bangdel achieved his most relevant series of paintings produced during his period in Paris, "Muna Madan", based on the poem of the Nepalese litterateur Laxmi Prasad Devkota (1909-1959) and where the so-called *Picasso-manqué* syndrome is clearly represented in his style. In his "Muna Madan" series he skilfully illustrates the history of Muna, who dies of sadness after being aware that her husband, Madan, will never come back from Tibet. Therefore, as well as his novels demonstrated, Bangdel´s greatest concern as a modern painter was the issue of exile from his motherland, Nepal.

[241] Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism. India´s Artists and the Avant Garde 1922-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.
[242] Manoj Aryal and Jose Martínez Rubio, *Memoria de España, de Lain Singh Bangdel* (Valencia: Alfa Delta Digital, 2010), 11.

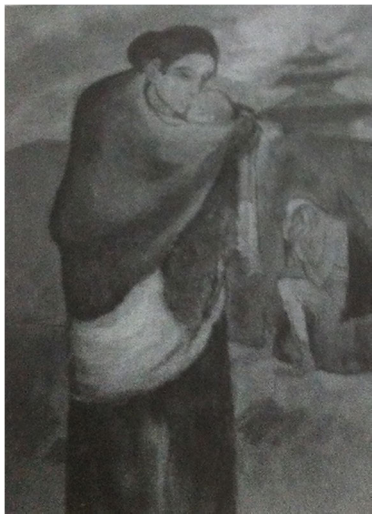


Fig. 143: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Motherland," c. 1950. Source: Lain Singh Bangdel, "*When Outside the Country*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2015." (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

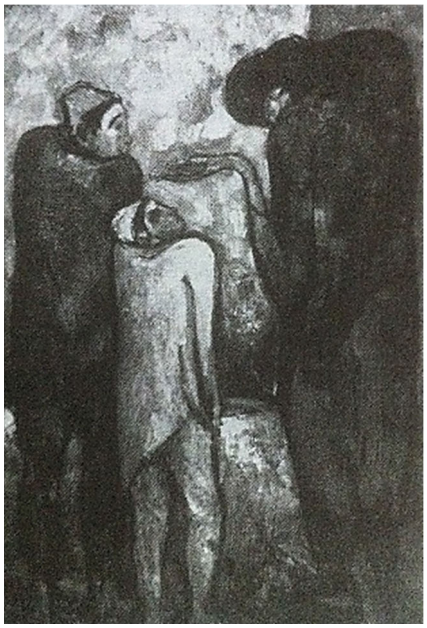


Fig. 144: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Poet laureate Laxmi Prasad Devkota´s master piece "Muna Madan", portrait one," c. 1950. Source: Lain Singh Bangdel, "*When Outside the Country*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 2015." (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

The "Muna Madan" series of paintings were also exhibited at Lain Singh Bangdel´s first retrospective in Kathmandu in 1962. Apparently, King Mahendra was especially fond of one of Bangdel´s "Muna Madan" paintings, entitled "The End of Journey", and which was described in the exhibition catalogue as a work where "The melancholy figures of the old man and woman suggest the end of a life journey. With the burden of old age, the old man has the mood of sadness in his face, but sorrow is hanging in her face too (Not for sale)". But, in spite of the artist´s initial intention of keeping this painting for himself, as soon as the event was over he sent to the Royal Palace as a gift for the King, and a symbolical way of thanking his mentor[243].

However, it should be pointed out that when comparing Lain Singh Bangdel´s servile attitude with the visual analysis of his "Muna Madan" series of paintings, the artist´s ambivalent attitude between his performative act in favour of the Panchayat

[243] Narendra Raj Prasai, *The Glory of Nepal. A Biography of Bangdel* (Kathmandu: Ekta Prakashan, 2003), 163.

regime and the subtle irony implicit in many of these works must be highlighted. This is particularly reflected in the character of Muna, a metaphor of Mother Nepal, and who is usually depicted as a lonely Nepalese woman with her head turned either backwards or downwards in a mysterious way. Involved in dark blue tonalities so as to enhance the halo of sadness depicted around the scene, Muna seems to be also an ironical criticism about the country´s unstable political situation during the transition and the break of the democratic promises under the Panchayat regime.

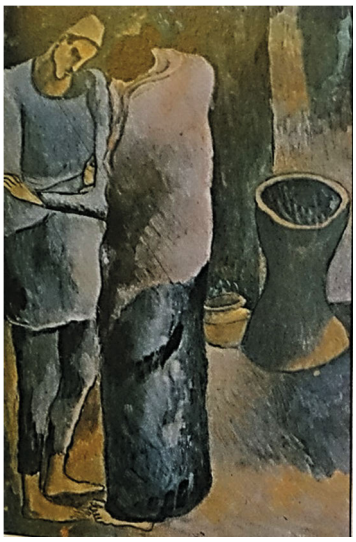


Fig. 145: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Muna Madan," 1955. Gouache. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991), image 5.

Fig. 146: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Muna Madan," 1955. Gouache. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991), image 5.

6.3. Other Nepalese modern artists in exile: The call of the Himalaya. A colourful revolt behind the abstract peaks.

> And then I picked up just a few colours
> Colours of earth, the wintry sky, the wintry sigh
> Colours of the song of the leaves gone dry
> And began floundering upon a piece of white.
>
> Virendra Subba, *Lines from Rubaiyat*[244].

Just before his historical departure to Europe, Bangdel travelled back to his homeland in order to attend a farewell party organised by Swami Prabhavananda (1893-1976) at the Ramakrishna mission in his honour[245]. It was during this time when the *Eastern Himalaya Fine Arts Exhibition* was being held in Darjeeling, and where relevant Nepalese modern artists including the late Bal Krishna Sama, Chandra Man Singh Maskey, Keshava Duvadi and Amar Chitrakar, were exhibiting their works[246]. Even though the information gathered about this show is too limited for its proper review, its importance has to be emphasized as an early step in the reunification of Nepal according to the idea of belonging to the Himalaya or *Gorkhārajya*, as one of the fundamental aims of King Mahendra´s political rule and the Panchayat regime.

Apart from Lain Singh Bangdel, it has to be said that there were other dwellers of the Himalaya who were momentarily chosen as representative creators for Nepal´s modernisation while following King Mahendra´s unifying will. One of the most striking examples is the case of Virendra Subba (1927-2016), an expressionist poet and painter from the Darjeeling hills, who dedicated his whole life to produce colourful abstract scenes of the Himalayan mountain range. But these works were also characterised by an uneasy sense of violence, as metaphorical reflections of his people´s suffering and pain.

It must be said that even if the figure of Virendra has nowadays been completely forgotten within the Nepalese creative background, he was a well renowned poet and

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[244] Chhettri, "President Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, writes the profile of Mr. Virendra, the artist, the poet and the musician," *ARTS*, 7 (1979), 8.

[245] P*rasa*i, *The Glory of Nepal.*

[246] *Amar´s Art. Paintings by celebrated court artist Amar Chitrakar,* edited by Lain Sigh Bangdel (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 1992), catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, April 13 through 28, 1991.

painter in Nepal even before Bangdel´s arrival to Kathmandu. Indeed, after finishing his training at Tagore´s Visva-Bharati University in *Śāntiniketan*. And thanks to the recommendation of his friend, the Indonesian painter Affandi (1907-1990), who will also established a close friendship with Lain Singh Bangdel during his period as a student in Paris.

Fig. 147: Virendra Subba´s self portrait, c. 1970. Watercolour on paper. © Collection of the Communist Centre, Darjeeling. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2016.

Fig. 148: Virendra Subba, c. 1970. Watercolour on paper. © Collection of the Communist Centre, Darjeeling. Source: Photo courtesy of the Communist Centre, 2016.

Virendra´s abstract paintings were selected for an exhibition at the Royal Nepal Academy (RNA) in 1959, in an event inaugurated by Prime Minister B.P. Koirala himself. Likewise, there was a time that Virendra was openly recognised in Nepal for his literary work and his services in the encouragement of the use of Nepali language, especially after the publication of his collection of poems *Meghamala*, the "garland of Clouds", in 1963. Due to which the RNA honoured him by sponsoring his solo art exhibition in New Delhi, in 1965[247].

Virendra´s last painting exhibition in the Kathmandu Valley took place in July 1970 at the National Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), with a total of twenty nine expressionist art works[248]. However, in contrast to the suitable smoothness characteristic of Bangdel´s

[247] Chhettri, "President Nepali Sahitya Sammelan".
[248] "Minister Gautam Opens Subba´s Art Exhibition," *The Rising Nepal,* July 25, 1970, 1.

painting styles, it has to be said that Virendra´s violent works could not be considered as proper reflections of "Nepaliness" according to the Panchayat national ideals. It was possibly due to this reason, and the artist´s polemical thoughts as a communist, why his figure has been overshadowed and left in oblivion by the art historians and artists in current Nepal.

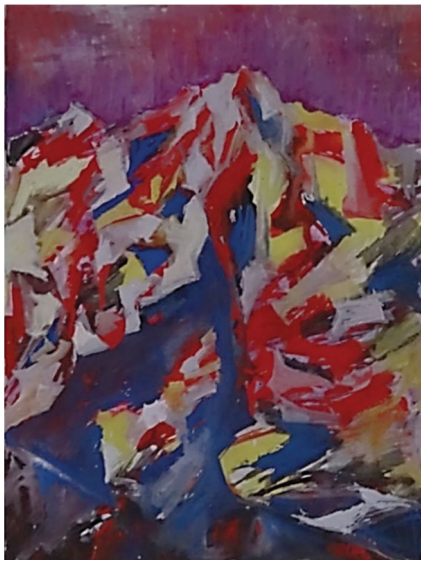

Fig. 149: Virendra Subba, c. 1970. Watercolour on paper. © Collection of the Communist Centre, Darjeeling. Source: Photo courtesy of the Communist Centre, 2016.

On the other hand, during his initial times in Kathmandu, Lain Singh Bangdel started to practice the art of seal painting, while being inspired by the sheer mountain range. For this reason, only a few months before his first exhibition at Saraswoti Sadan, Bangdel organised a small but significant tour to Kakani village in order to paint the Himalayan scenery, along with the prolific poet Siddhicharan Shrestha (1912-1992), and the abstract experimental artist Gehendra Man Amatya[249]. But while Gehendra Man Amatya represented the peaks without clouds and in the moments of sunrise or sunset, Bangdel´s paintings were particularly characterised by representing the mountain scene hidden behind a dense halo of fog that concealed its peaks, while following the picturesque outlook established by the British travellers and explorers in the Himalaya over the 19th century.

Fig. 150: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Nepali Landscape," undated. Source: Dina Bangdel and Don Messerschmidt, *Against the Current. The Life of Lain Singh Bangdel. Writer, Painter and Art Historian of Nepal* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2004), 140.

[249] Siddhicharan Shrestha was one of the revolutionary Nepalese poets who had been in jail due to his polemical compositions against the Rana rulers, published in Sharada magazine in 1934. Gehendra Man Amatya was invited by Siddhicharan to join them on this trip. In Lain Singh Bangdel, "A Versatile Genius," in *The Great Poet Siddhicharan Shrestha*, ed. Mahesh Paudyal, (Nepal: Yugkavi Siddhicharan Foundation, 2016), 68.

Fig. 151: Siddicharan Shrestha at Kakani village, 1961. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

Fig. 152: Gehendra Man Amatya, "Ganesh Himal," 1961. Oil on cardboard. Kakani village. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

Curiously, the picturesque idea seems to have been the source of influence of Bangdel´s later works, developed towards his abstract representations of the Himalaya and characterised by using mystic clouds and fogs, as well as the abandonment of the blue colour for a variety of multiple tones. Among them, red colour was always highlighted as, according to the artist, "a way to express the revolutionary aspects of Nepal"[250]. Therefore it could be stated that, in spite of the naïve appearances of Bangdel´s mountain depictions, there was also a subtle sense of irony and futility added in his personal way of depicting the Himalayan peaks. This hypothesis that seems to be confirmed after the fall of the Panchayat in 1990 and one of the painter´s last works, "Struggle for Democracy", where Bangdel uses his characteristic blue fogs and patches of red in order to represents the revolutionary movement that led to the historical fall of the regime.

Fig. 153: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Untitled abstract," c. 1960. Source: Dina Bangdel and Don Messerschmidt, *Against the Current. The Life of Lain Singh Bangdel. Writer, Painter and Art Historian of Nepal* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2004), 155.

[250] Bangdel and Messerschmidt, *Against the Current*, 169-170.

Fig. 154: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Struggle for Democracy," 1991. Source: Dina Bangdel and Don Messerschmidt, *Against the Current. The Life of Lain Singh Bangdel. Writer, Painter and Art Historian of Nepal* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2004), 160.

Fig. 155: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Struggle for Democracy," 1991. Oil on canvas. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991), image 36.

However, it cannot be denied that the figure of Bangdel has always been credited for developing a suitable form of depicting the Himalaya according to the "Nepaliness" idea. By using big patches of plain colours, fast strokes and lack of environmental perspective, his paintings were historically established as the main reference for the upcoming creators who were also inspired in the Himalayan scene. For instance, it is likely that Bangdel´s mountain representations had a significantly degree of influence in the mountain abstract landscapes of the renowned Laxman Shrestha (1939). Considered as products of the nostalgia of a Nepalese artists living in exile, Mr. Shrestha´s abstract paintings were initially developed during his youth period as a student in the Sir J.J.

School of Arts. Having completed his degree in 1963, his paintings were exhibited at Gallery Chemould coinciding with King Mahendra´s official visit to Mumbai, and who invited Laxman to come back to Nepal to help him in the development of national modern art, as he had done with Bangdel a year before.

Laxman´s first art exhibition at Tri Chandra College would take place in that year, consisting of a series of figurative works based on picturesque representations of the Gods and Goddesses of Nepal, and somehow reminders of Uttam Nepali´s first exhibition during the initial steps of the configuration of the "Nepaliness" idea in 1950s[251]. However, Laxman would not stay in Nepal for long, as having been granted a French Government Scholarship he headed to Paris so as to carry on his art education at L'École des Beaux Arts, and where he would develop an original abstract technique based on the mixture of oil and varnish on paper[252]. When in September 1967 Laxman Shrestha returned to Kathmandu, his solo exhibition was organised at NAFA, where the artist exhibited a total of sixty five experimental abstractions inspired on the Parisian streets. According to the French ambassador, these paintings were composed by "burnt sienna, blue and black, nearly invading the whole canvass", with a characteristic use of lines, crosses, moon-shapes and other forms[253].

Fig. 156: Laxman Shrestha´s art work, c. 1967. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2017.

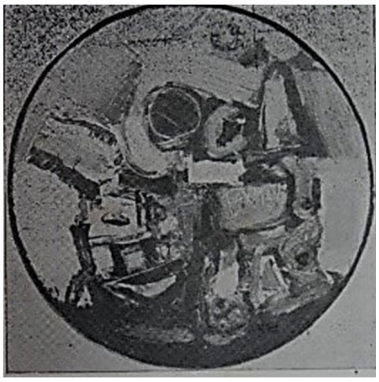

Fig. 157: Laxman Shrestha, "Painting," c. 1970. Source: Thakur Prasad Mainali, ed., *NAFA Art Magazine* (1970), 51.

[251] Amatya, "Popular Nepali Artist Laxman Shrestha II".

[252] Laxman´s original paintings were even awarded First Price at the French International Painting Exhibition in April 1966. In "Nepalese Painter Wins First Place in Paris Exhibition," The Rising Nepal, May 3, 1966, 1.

[253] Jean Francais, "Laxman Shresth As I See Him. Through The Third Eye," *The Rising Nepal*, September 17, 1967, 3.

Fig. 158: Laxman Shrestha, 1997. Mixed media on paper. Source: Saffronart, Modern Indian Art, accessed March 3, 2017.

It would be from these initial abstractions from where Mr. Shrestha developed his creativity towards his outstanding imageries of the Himalayan scene in mural-scale canvases, complemented with mystical descriptions of his own performative experiences as a "spiritual artist", which made him a popular painter in the international context of today[254]. Hence, as well as in ancient times the mountain had been a strong source of inspiration for the creation of diverse forms of art in the Kathmandu Valley, the same imagery was adopted as an iconic symbol for the development of modern art according to the "Nepaliness" ideals. But also, it has to be said that these abstract representations of the mountain range did not differ much from the mystical sceneries and exotic views of the country as Shangri-La. Consequently, the modern trend of picturing the Himalaya, and leaded by iconic artists such as Bangdel, can be translated as a proper example of the hybridisation between the ancient styles and the imported ones, appropriated by the local artists as ideal ways to reflect their national identity as "dwellers of the Himalaya" towards the international world.

[254] Soma Das, "Being Laxman Shresta. The Untold Story of the Legendary Artist," *The Hindustan Times*, August 19, 2016.

Part three

The King´s creative mandala

> "Artists are public and their creation is public's property, a nation's property. Aesthetics is one of the most important aspects of art, and all creation is filled with the beauty of aesthetics that may influence the people for the communal nationalist feelings." King Birendra, 1966[255].

As soon as Nepal opened its frontiers its traditional forms of art started to be put in value at the same time as the post-colonial influences from India and international trends were introduced into the country. Both aspects led to the progressive evolution of modern art around the "Nepaliness" idea, as a hybrid between the avant-garde techniques and the preservation of the national iconographies, by using the cultural aspects of Kathmandu in a traditional way. Hence, essentially established around the ancient culture of the *newār* and the Himalayan natural environment, the concept of "Nepaliness" was created as a tool for the "promotion of our culture and natural heritages to the broader world", according to King Mahendra[256].

In order to offer an opportunity to those artists capable of reflecting the national ideals in their modern visual works, in the 1960s the Royal Family established the National Art Council (NAC) and the National Association of Fine Arts (NAFA), in the same way that the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964),

Fig. 159: Keshava Duvadi, calendar illustration, 1964. © Keshava Duvadi Art Museum. Source: Photo courtesy of Pradib Duvadi , 2017.

[255] "*Annual Journal of NAFA* (1966)" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).
[256] Thakur Prasad Mainali, ed., "*NAFA Art Magazine* (1972)" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

favoured the development of visual arts in this country through the opening the Lalitkala Academy and the National Gallery of Modern Art[257]. Besides, the *National Art Exhibitions* started to be organised on an annual basis, and always for Prince Birendra´s birthday celebrations.

Fig. 160: Bal Krishna Sama, "Zhou Enlai," c. 1957. Source: Photo courtesy of Jeevan SJB Rana, 2015.

As it happened with the trend of picturesque realism during the times of the Rana regime, it has to be said that since the opening of the country since the 1950s modern art continued to be used as an effective way for the projection of the Kingdom of Nepal, and the establishment of enduring relations with the foreign dignitaries from India and China, who visited the Kathmandu Valley in those times. For instance, when in October 1956 the Indian President Rajendra Prasad (1884-1963) paid a visit to the Nepalese capital, King Mahendra adopted a friendly strategy while presenting the realistic portraits of the Indian politicians in welcoming arches and gates all over Kathmandu[258]. Similarly when the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai (1898-1976) visited Nepal in January 1957, following the establishment of the Treaty of Friendship and Trade with China, a number of portraits of the Premier against a picturesque Himalayan background were commissioned[259].

However, it is curious to note that modern art was not used with regard to the Nepalese encounters with European or American visitors in Kathmandu Valley. Indeed, for the broader side of the world, Nepal was internationally claimed by the "dreams of otherness", projected by those Western youngsters who arrived in Kathmandu through the "Hippie Trail". But, as Lietchy states, "how did the Nepalese respond to this influx of foreign youth and what did they make of them?"[260]. The most obvious response was in

[257] Mitter, *Indian Art*, 203.

[258] L. P. S. Shrivastava, *Nepal at the Crossroads* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Limited, 1996), 38.

[259] These portraits were relevant in a time when the mountain frontier between China and Nepal was starting to be contested. In Toni Hagen, *Nepal. The Kingdom in the Himalaya* (Lalitpur: Himal Books, 1998), 154.

[260] Liechty, "Building the Road to Kathmandu," 24.

terms of business, leading to the inauguration of new tourist areas, like "Freak Street" in Juddha Saddhak, and the opening of private art galleries that commercialised with fake copies of Nepalese traditional art.

Thanks to the "traditional trend" and the increase of its economic value, in 1956 King Mahendra promulgated the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act through which the *guṭhi* associations were gathered under the governmental Guthi Sanstan[261]. However, for several reasons this new organisation failed on its purpose, thus the ancient temples of Kathmandu Valley were sadly left to a progressive aspect of abandonment and decay[262].

Fig. 161: Amar Chitrakar, "Zhou Enlai," c. 1957. © Chhauni National Museum. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

Besides, as a way to institutionalise the historical research of the ancient pieces and architectural styles of Nepal, in 1953 the Archaeological Department was inaugurated by his Majesty[263]. As an assiduous collaborator with the purpose of this institution, Lain Singh Bangdel gathered a significant archive of photographs picturing the ancient sculptures of Kathmandu Valley, and publishing them in the books *The Early Sculptures of Nepal*, in 1982, and *Zweitausendfünfhundert Jahre Nepalesische Kunst*, in 1987. However, it is paradoxical that at the same time as the "Nepaliness" idea emphasized the representation of the local iconographies in order to reflect the richness of the country´s cultural heritage, the traditional sculptures of ancient *Nepāl* were disappearing since they were beign stolen by anonymous international mafias through the whole Panchayat period, a fact that was finally denounced by Bangdel in 1989. This happened just after his

[261] In ancient times the *newār* community of artists used to be organised around cultural associations named *guṭhi*. These associations had their origins in the Licchavi *gosthi*, or "association" in Sanskrit. They were established around the head of a *thākāli*, who was the eldest thus most experienced man in the group. Its basic functions were to serve as congregations for the accomplishment of religious obligations such as the celebration of festivals linked to agricultural activities, the pursuing of funerary rituals or repairing of a decaying temples or shrines. In Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, 12.

[262] In spite of this, during the last years parallel associations have been created such as women groups, literary societies, and youth clubs which, according to Toffin, need to be valued as developers of new forms of art and cultural alternatives as unavoidable consequence of modern times. In Gerard Toffin, "From Kin to Caste. The Role of Guthis in Newar Society and Culture" (paper presented at The Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture, Social Science Baha, September 23, 2005), 36.

[263] "Department of Archaeology." Accessed May 5, 2018, http://www.doa.gov.np

resignement from the RNA´s Chancellor post, through the publication of his popular work *Stolen Images of Nepal*, where the artist used this collection of photographs as relevant proofs to demonstrate the gradual disappearance of these ancient pieces, easily accessible in the Valley´s open shrines[264].

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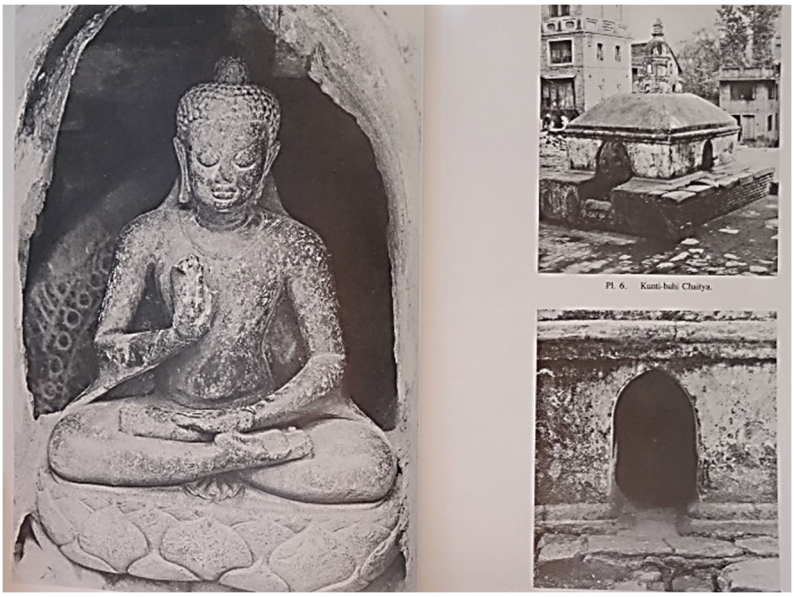

Fig. 162: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Empty niche where the Seated Buddha was originally located at *Kunti-bahi caitya*," 1989. Photography. Source: Lain Singh Bangdel, *Stolen Images of Nepal* (Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 1989).

[264] Lain Singh Bangdel, *Stolen Images of Nepal* (Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy, 1989). Another relevant work wich denounced the same problematic during those times was Jürgen Schick´s work *The Gods are Leaving the Country: Art Theft from Nepal*.

7. Modern "Nepaliness". Promoting the Kingdom of the Himalaya.

> "Art, after all, is the heart-beat of a nation. It is enough that one studies the artistic traditions of the nation in order to see its soul in all its tonal gradations, including the brilliant highlights and dark mysterious shades." Lain Singh Bangdel, 1962[265].

Apart from establishing the "Nepaliness" idea in the avant-garde painting style with his own works as an example, Lain Singh Bangdel needs to be credited for his relevant collaboration in many of the cultural activities that had developed since the onset of this new era in the evolution modern art of Nepal. Hence, besides his historical collaboration with the Archaoelogical Department, he prompted the inaguguration of the Nepal Art Council (NAC), in April 22, 1963. This institution was idealised as a cultural organisation for the exhibition of the Western art reproductions imported by Lain Singh Bangdel from European lands, at the same time as he followed the Prime Minister B.P. Koirala´s request during his visits to London[266]. Therefore, from that year onwards a series of events with these art reproductions were developed with the aim of setting an example for the upcoming modern artists in the country, as the Prime Minister Juddha Shumshere Rana did with Prince Albert´s and Queen Victoria´s portraits a century ago[267].

Thus, on the one hand the following chapter focuses on the analysis of the NAC and its first exhibitions of Western art reproductions in its most diverse styles and, on the other it also speaks about the first traditional and modern art exhibitions organised outside Nepal for the international promotion of the Country of the Gods. Besides, with regard to the same situation within the confinements of the Valley, the establishment of the National Association of Fine Arts (NAFA) and the *National Art Exhibitions* are analysed,

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[265] Lain Singh Bangdel, "Painting: A Comparative Study," trans. Tirtha R. Tuladhar, in *Nepal. Monograph on Nepalese Culture,* (Kathmandu: Ministry of Education, 1962), 47.

[266] Bangdel and Messerschmidt, *Against the Current*, 76.

[267] This institution opened thanks to the financial support of General Mrigendra Shumshere Rana, who also donated furniture and even some art reproductions collected by himself during his trips to several European countries. In Salphaya Amatya, "Nepal Art Council: Some Suggestions," *The Rising Nepal,* August 7, 1968, 4.

while unveiling the subtle censorship implicit in the process of selection of the modern painters of Nepal, according to the political interests of the time.

7.1. The Nepal Art Council (NAC) and the first modern & traditional art exhibitions in India and the West.

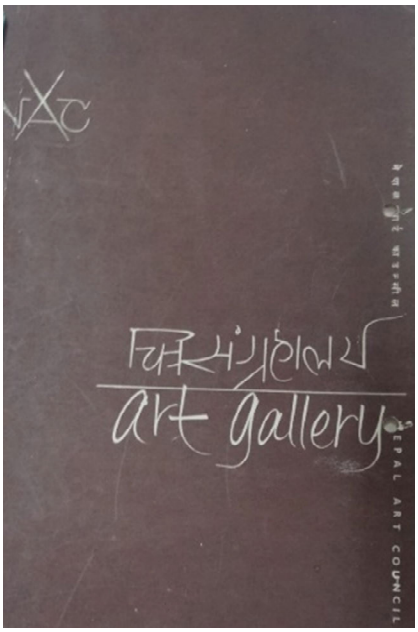


Fig. 163: Art Gallery, 1968. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

The NAC´s first exhibition of Western art reproductions took place in August 24, 1963 at Saraswoti Sadan[268]. It would be a few years later in February 16, 1968, when a larger show would be organised by the NAC at Babhar Mahal, where around two hundred art works from Europe, Russia and the United States were presented as an inspiration to the Nepalese experimental painters[269]. However, besides the existence of some reproductions of Picasso donated by the French Government, in the exhibition catalogue Bangdel misses the absence of the great Spanish paintings as follows: "The Council regrets not being able to procure in its collection the reproductions of great artists like El Greco, Velazquez, Murillo and Goya… But, we are certain that they will be included in future"[270].

The Western art reproductions collection would carry on expanding year by year, and in April 27, 1977, eighty-nine works, donated from the collection of the Dresden Gallery through the German Democratic Republic, were exhibited at the RNA´s

[268] Apparently, this exhibition consisted in a series of Italian paintings in classical style. In "Nepal Art Council: Some Suggestions," *The Rising Nepal*, 4.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Lain Singh Bangdel, introduction to *Art Gallery* (Kathmandu: Nepal Art Council, 1967), catalogue of an exhibition at the Nepal Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 1967, 1-2.

exhibition hall. But this time, besides the usual reproductions of renowned artists coming from different European countries, the mysterious presence of three ancient works from Egypt are to be highlighted as a peculiar aspect of this event[271].

Fig. 164: "A group photo with the then His Majesty after the inauguration of reproductions painting exhibition at Babar Mahal," 1968. Source: Banshee Shrestha, "Historical activities of NAC." *Celebrating Fifty Years of Nepal Art Council* (2013): 10.

Fig. 165: "Visitors viewing the reproductions paintings at Babar Mahal," 1968. Source: Banshee Shrestha, "Historical activities of NAC." *Celebrating Fifty Years of Nepal Art Council* (2013): 10.

As a result, due to the harsh climatic conditions characteristic of the Kathmandu Valley, the Council´s collection began to decay, because of the damage caused by insects and other harmful elements. For this reason, the Nepalese Government decided to intervene with financial support in order to build a gallery at Babhar Mahal in 1991, where the Western art reproductions collection could be properly stored up to the present day, and presenting an interesting subject to be further analysed in future researches on this

[271] *Exhibition of the colour reproductions of "Art Treasures in the Museums of the G.D.R. - from the old masters to the present,"* (Kathmandu: Nepal Art Council, 1977), catalogue of an exhibition at the Nepal Art Council, Kathmandu, April 27 through May 2, 1977.

particular issue. In spite of the relevance of this, Salphaya states that the NAC´s creative activities were not so popular among the dwellers of Kathmandu Valley or the foreigners in the Himalaya, since the number of visitors to this "temple of art" would barely reach a dozen people per day[272].

Fig. 166: Colour reproduction, sample I. © Art Council. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

Fig. 167: Colour reproduction, sample II. © Art Council. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

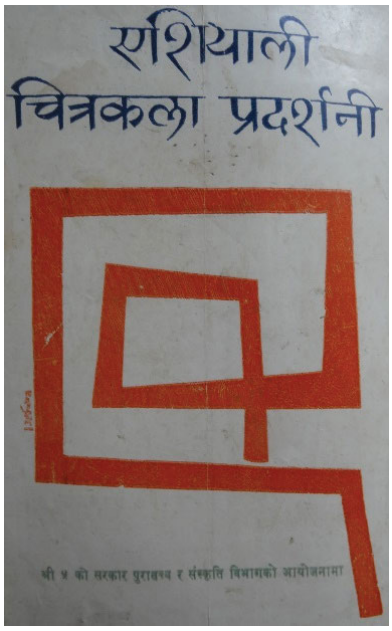


Fig. 168: Lain Singh Bangdel, *Asian Art Exhibition*, 1963. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

Although constricted to a few privideldged spectators, usually belonging to the elites of Nepal, in a parallel way to the Art Council´s creative activities a number of Nepalese art exhibitons were arranged as a way to promote and develop the Kingdom of the Himalaya. For instance, as a first step towards the international promotion of Nepal within the eastern part of the world, in 1963 the *Asian Art Exhibition* was organised in Kathmandu. Inaugurated by Prince Gyanendra, this historical show presented the traditional arts of a significant number of Asian countries, along with a selection of Nepalese modern paintings made by previously mentioned artists such as Amar Chitrakar, Chandra Man Singh Maskey,

[272] "Nepal Art Council: Some Suggestions", 4.

Gehendra Man Amatya, Lain Singh Bangdel, or even Bal Krishna Sama, whose work consisted of a portrait of Rabindranath Tagore[273].

With the same purpose, and coinciding with King Mahendra´s official visit to India between August and September, two Nepalese modern art exhibitions were organised in New Delhi almost at the same time: The *Nepal Arts & Crafts Exhibition* and the *Exhibition of Contemporary Nepalese Paintings and Homecrafts*. Both of them are relevant to note the contested path of development that was starting to characterise the modern art of Nepal during those days.

Fig. 169: Prince Gyanendra observing a picture in the *Asian Art Exhibition*, 1963. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

The *Nepal Arts & Crafts Exhibition* was organised by Nepal´s Department of Archaeology and India´s Ministry of Cultural Affairs, and inaugurated on August 27 at Azad Bhavan by President Radakrishna, in order to support "the role of friendship between India and the Himalayan Kingdom"[274]. This exhibition was particularly characterised by presenting the picturesque styles of the Rana court painters, such as Chandra Man Singh Maskey or Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, as well as a selection of traditional crafts, folk songs and dances[275].

Fig. 170: Lain Singh Bangdel, *Exhibition of Contemporary Nepalese paintings and Homecrafts*, 1963. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

On the other hand, the *Exhibition on Contemporary Nepalese Paintings and Homecrafts* would be opened two days later, on August 29, in the terrace of the India International Centre. This event was organised by the Council of Nepalese Affairs and inaugurated by King Mahendra. Presented as a much bigger event than the previous one, it counted with a total of eight pavilions with both modern and ancient Nepalese paintings, as well as the performance of Indian and Nepalese folk dances and songs[276]. In contrast to the

[273] *Asian Art Exhibition*, 1963. Courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.
[274] "Emphasis on Closer India-Nepal Ties," *The Industan Times*, August 28, 1963, 1.
[275] "Glimpses of Nepalese Culture," *The Industan Times*, August 27, 1963, 3.
[276] "Indo-Nepalese Differences Are Family Quarrels," *The Industan Times*, August 29, 1963, 2.

Nepal Arts & Crafts Exhibition, the later was characterised by a selection of the upcoming avant-garde artists and styles, where a number of already renowned modern painters from Darjeeling and Kathmandu, such as Virendra Subba, Gehendra Man Amatya and Urmila Upadhyay were chosen[277].

Fig. 171: *Nepalese Arts & Crafts Exhibition*, 1963. New Delhi. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

At the same time as the Nepalese elites encouraged and promoted the Western avant-garde styles in the country, the recent opening of the Valley to foreign intercourse caused the unveiling of the "ancient wonders of Nepal", which immediately appealed to the international community. As a consequence, a great number of books and researches that represented the picturesque culture of the Kingdom of the Himalaya started to be sold in the Western market, some of which have been used as the basic bibliography of this work, such as *The Art of Nepal. A Guide to the Masterpieces of Sculpture, Painting and Woodcarving* by Lydia Aran, 1978, or Mary. S. Slusser´s *Nepal Mandala. A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley*, 1982.

Also, a significant number of traditional art exhibitions from Nepal began to be organised in India and different countries of the West, beign one of the first ones curated by the artist Urmila Upadhayay Garg in Sir J.J. School of Arts[278]. Followingly, in the summer of 1964 a number of ancient art pieces from Nepal were exhibited by the art historian Stella Kramrisch (1896-1993) at the Asia House Gallery in the United States, in

[277] However, while the catalogue presents an overview of these artists as representatives of the modern art movement in Panchayat Nepal, there are no reproductions of the paintings presented. In *Exhibition of Contemporary Nepalese Paintings and Homecrafts. Organised by Council for Nepalese Affairs,* catalogue of an exhibition, New Delhi, 1963.

[278] However, this fact is sustained only by Urmila´s declaration, artist was not able to provide any document to proof the existence of this early event in Mumbai. Urmila Uphadayay Garg personal communication with the author, April 22, 2015.

an event patronised by King Mahendra[279]. Also, the *Nepalese Art* exhibition in Paris, organised in 1966 by the Archaeological Department of Kathmandu, as an especial event to praise King Mahendra during his official visit to the French capital. In the latter, a total of ninety-four ancient art pieces were publicly displayed along with six illustrating pictures on the Nepalese temples, stupas and wood carvings[280]. According to *The Rising Nepal*, in later stages this show would move to other European capitals at Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, in order to strengthen the presence of the Himalayan country in different parts of the world[281].

As a result, a round trip process of different influences started to occur, parallel to the encouragement of the development of modern art in Nepal in two different ways. As, at the same time as the Nepalese were increasingly fascinated by the avant-garde movements and trends taking place in the West, the foreigners claimed for the original culture of traditional Nepal and the need to preserve it. It was due to this, that the development of modern art will gradually experiment a significant movement back towards the "traditionalisation" of its avant-garde styles as a way to both preserve and promulgate the richness of the nation to the international world, while fitting with the Panchayat´s ideals for national development and experimenting with the avant-garde styles of painting according to the new times.

[279] *The Art of Nepal,* edited by Stella Kramrisch (United States: Asia House Gallery, 1964) catalogue of an exhibition at the Asia House Gallery, United States, summer 1964, 1.
[280] "Nepal Art Exhibition in Paris. Ancient Relics and Artistic Collection to be Displayed," *The Rising Nepal*, September 22, 1966, 1.
[281] "Nepalese Art Show in Denmark," *The Rising Nepal*, October 1, 1967.

7.2. Modern art, for the people of Nepal. The *First National Art Exhibition* at the Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA).

> "Art is not merely creation, but should help to propagate our culture and artists in the development of our country. It is high time that every Nepalese artist should contribute what he or she can to the National construction in the spirit of considering the national interest as self-interest." King Birendra, 1975[282].

As part of the Royal promotion of modern visual arts in the Kingdom of the Himalaya, in June 17, 1965, the Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA) was inaugurated by Prince Birendra at the Sita Bhawan palace[283]. Established as "a central agency where young and senior artists are united", this association had the aim of preserving as well as modernising the traditional arts of Nepal, in a similar way to the traditional *guṭhi* of the *newār*[284]. Particularly through the *National Art Exhibitions,* annually organised in order to celebrate King Birendra´s birthday, this institution was launched to control the development of modern art according to the Panchayat´s national ideals, and where the art works awarded were usually kept at the NAFA´s Birendra Art Gallery, as part of the monarch´s private art collection[285].

Fig. 172: The Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA), 1965. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

[282] G. Rai, "Liberal Patron Of Arts," *The Rising Nepal,* December 28, 1984.
[283] This palace was built by Bhim Shumshere Rana in honour of his wife Sita Bada Maharani. Rana et al., *The Ranas of Nepal,* 164.
[284] "*Annual Journal of NAFA (1966)*"
[285] Due to the political changes of the last years on top of the outcome of the earthquake in 2015, this valuable collection is kept unavailable for public´s view.

Despite the relevance of the NAFA and the *National Art Exhibitions* for the history of art in Nepal, the information available is extremely limited due to a lack of documentation and pass of time. It is only thanks to the comments published in *The Rising Nepal* how we can find some clues about how these *National Art Exhibitions* look from the first stage. One of the most relevant articles in this matter is Per Meyer´s review on the *First National Art Exhibition*, which took place on December 25, 1965[286]. According to him, the NAFA´s exhibition hall was designed as a sanctuary consecrated to a "chaotic amalgam" of diverse art styles, most of them badly framed or without glass protection, and apparently organised without any order or aesthetical sense. Also, in spite of the "sober and matter-of-fact way" of the catalogue´s design, the author highlights the aspect of the exhibition hall as a "theatrical scenario", profusely decorated with walls filled with stucco and a "female touch" in flowers and ornaments on every floor and corner of the gallery, where "only few pictures could be squeezed in between the ornaments"[287].

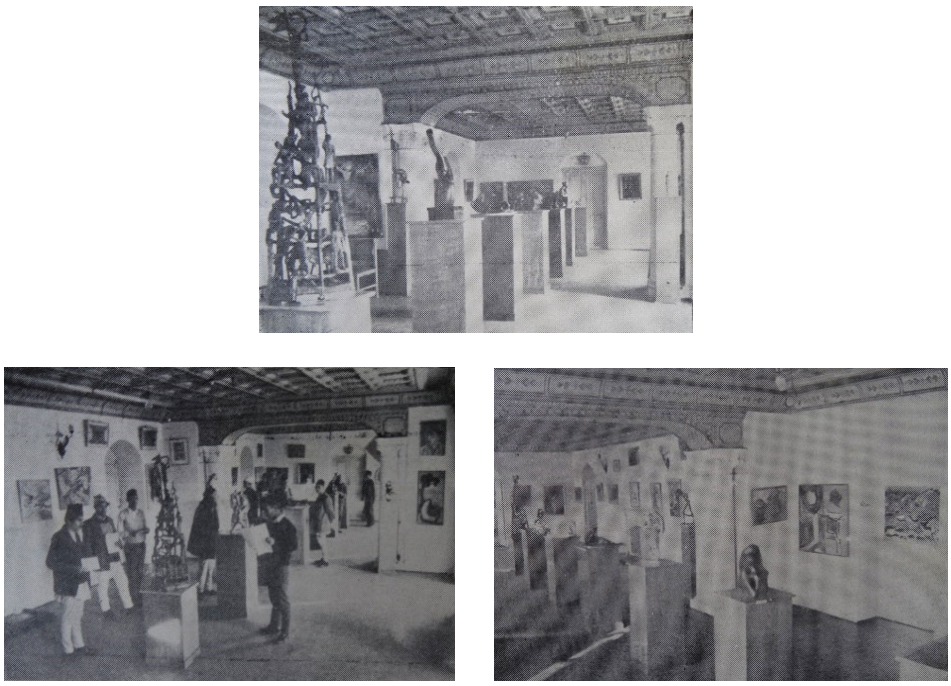


Fig. 173: NAFA Art Gallery, 1970. Source: Thakur Prasad Mainali, ed., *NAFA Art Magazine* (1970), 80.

[286] Per Meyer was a European who resided in Kathmandu from 1964 to 1967. In Café Global. Per Meyer exposition. Accessed January 15, 2018. http://www.cafegloben.dk.

[287] Per Meyer, "A National Art-Exhibition Analysis and Criticism (II)," *The Rising Nepal*, January 19, 1966.

Fig. 174: K.K. Karmacharya, c. 1970. Collage and mixed media. Collection of the artist. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

On the other hand, even if Meyer praises the relevance of the *National Art Exhibition* as a point of contact and support for the new generation of avant-garde artists of Nepal regardless their caste or family background, he also criticises the general confusion laid in these experimental works as follows: "A great number of motives and manner of painting both Nepali and inspired by, borrowed or copied from styles in the East as well as the West, were exhibited. The impression as a whole was somehow chaotic"[288]. This may be the main reason why very few works of art were sold, despite the great number of visitors that witnessed such an historical event.

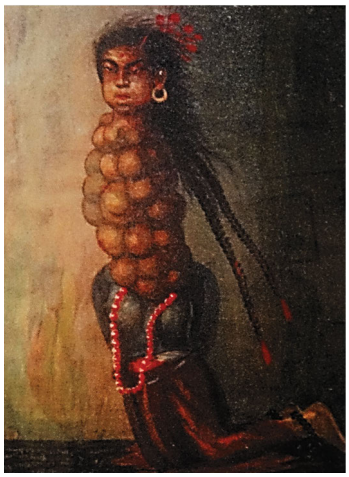
Through the analysis of the different types of experimental art works displayed, the author highlights the great number of watercolours, woodcuts, pastels, and even an "embryonic collage"[289]. It is likely that the latter refered to one of the abstract works of the young artist Kanchha Kumar Karmacharya (1948), who after his studies at the Juddha Kala Pathsala used to make experimental collages, with an outstanding ability for colour combination and contrasted forms in his skills[290]. However, in further steps of his career K.K. Karmacharya would completely abandon this style so as to fully dedicate himself to the representation of "motion" in oil painting, and inspired in the mountain imagery surrounding Kathmandu. This seems to have happened particularly after his solo art exhibition at NAFA in 1971, where his collages received a negative review by the art critic Deepak Shimkhada (1945). He referred to Karmacharya´s work as follows: "The painterly quality is lost when he works on collage. Those done on collage look rather

Fig. 175: K.K. Karmacharya, "Collage," 1981. Mixed media. Source: *Fifth Triennale-India, 1982* (New Delhi: Lalit Kala Akademi, 1982) catalogue of an exhibition at the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1982, 46.

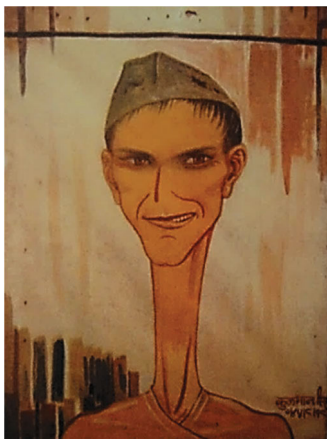
[288] Ibid., 3.
[289] Ibid.
[290] K.K. Karmacharya, personal communication with the author, June 10, 2015.

linear than painterly. It is because he does not paint over the collage, but because he juxtaposes paper cuttings over the painted surface"[291].

Another relevant artist particularly highlighted in Meyer´s article was Kul Man Singh Bandhari (1925-2000), whose painting "*Gaayak*", or "The Singer", highlighted by the author as a "really striking and original idea, good composition and executed with well-chosen dark colours and precise brush strokes"[292]. Kul Man Singh was in those times a relevant artist who also a participated in both the *Asian Art Exhibition* at Kathmandu and in the *Contemporary Nepalese Paintings Exhibition* in Delhi[293]. However, it is important to notice that his figure does not seem to have much voice within the capital´s creative framework of nowadays, possibly due to the high degree of criticism in his particular paintings and the obvious lack of "Nepaliness" implicit on them.



Fig, 177: Kul Man Singh Bandhari, "*Manko Kura* (Inner Desire)." © Collection of Kul Man Singh´s family. Source: Rajman Maharjan, "Late Kul Man Singh Bandhari and His Art Works" (Thesis, Tribhuvan University, 2012), plate IV.



Fig, 178: Kul Man Singh Bandhari, "*Garibiko Rekhamuni* (Below the Poverty Line)." © Collection of Kul Man Singh´s family. Source: Rajman Maharjan, "Late Kul Man Singh Bandhari and His Art Works" (Thesis, Tribhuvan University, 2012), plate V.

Coming from a background of farmers, Kul Man Singh developed a great consciousness of the hardships that his people used to endure. During his early stages as a student at the Juddha Kala Pathsala, his paintings were characterised by a deep sense of metaphorical irony, reflected in his polemical paintings based on Marxist ideals, and in his cartoons published in *Sarada Art Magazine*. For instance, these ironical aspects can be identified in his "Manko Kura", or "Inner desire", where a Nepalese women appears with her mouth symbolically sewn so that her voice is trapped in her throat. Or also in his work "Below the Poverty", in which a man is symbolically depicted with a very long neck, showing the same idea by representing "the

[291] Deepak Shimkhada, "Exhibition of Oil and Collage", *The Rising Nepal*, December 3, 1971, 4.
[292] "A National Art-Exhibition Analysis and Criticism (II)".
[293] *Uttam Nepali. Celebrating 46 Years of Creativity*, (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2004), catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, March 21 through April 7, 2004.

ambition of the Nepalese people while trying to do impossible tasks in a Third World country"[294].

But among all the paintings exhibited at the *First National Art Exhibition*, the one chosen to receive the prestigious "Birendra Gold Medal" was one of the paintings of Lain Singh Bangdel, entitled "The End of Journey" in *The Rising Nepal*[295]. Possibly referring to the painting "The End of the Day" in *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art* exhibition´s catalogue, where the artist represented a poor Nepalese peasant in a semi-realistic style. The fact that h decided to to from blue to pink may show an inspiration on Picasso´s historical transition from his Blue to his Pink Period. In a similar way, the first prize would be granted to Durga Baral (1943), a young artist from Pokhara whose drawing also represented a poor peasant, while following the painting styles established in Nepal after Bangdel´s first retrospective at Saraswoti Sadan.

Fig. 179: Durga Baral, first prize at the *First National Art Exhibition* in NAFA, 1956. Source: Photo courtesy of Durga Baral, 2017.

However, it should be pointed out that in spite of been chosen as recipients of such prestigious prizes, both these art works are characterised by the depiction of humble

[294] Rajman Maharjan, "Late Kul Man Singh Bandhari and His Art Works" (Thesis, Tribhuvan University, 2012).

[295] While in the book *Against the Current. The life of Lain Singh Bangdel. Writer, Painter and Art Historian Nepal*, Don Messerchmid states that Bangdel´s awarded work was his piece "Old Man *stūpa*", done in 1956, (p. 146) this work has preferred to believe the information provided in *The Rising Nepal* as a more verificable source. In "Prince Gyanendra Opens Exhibition of Paintings. End of the Journey Awarded," *The Rising Nepal*, December 25, 1965.

inhabitants, with a considerable degree of irony implicit in them. On the one hand, Bangdel´s "The End of the Day" seems to refer to his previous painting "Boy with Pink Shawl", 1955, in which a solitary figure is symbolically represented against blue mists, and curiously coinciding with the times of King Tribhuvan´s death in the same year[296]. And, on the other, the metaphorical significance of Baral´s peasant facing towards the other side of the picture, as it is the case of the "Muna Madan" series of paintings, is mysterious attitude that can only be explained through painter´s ambivalent attitude with regard to the political situation of the country. A hypothesis that seems to be confirmed when Durga Baral was acknowledged as one of the most important critical cartoonists of Nepal in the post-modern times[297].

Fig. 180: Lain Singh Bangdel, "Boy with Pink Shawl," 1955. Gouache. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991), image 7.

[296] In March 1955, King Tribhuvan passed away in Zürich, Switzerland, under mysterious circumstances.
[297] Prabal Bikram Shah, "Satire in Durga Baral´s Cartoons" (Thesis, Tribhuvan University, 2012).

7.3. Analysing the "Nepaliness" idea: The paintings of Prince Birendra, a national inspiration.

> "When I want a real dream, I write a poem. When I want to give dreaming forms to my feelings, I paint. When I want an elixir for life, I write a poem. When I want to bring the dead back to life, I paint." Bal Krishna Sama[298].

As well as in ancient times the Kings of Nepal were the main promoters of the development of the traditional art and architecture in the Kathmandu Valley, in modern times the figure of Prince Birendra was established at the central core of the NAFA´s mandalic scenario, not only as chairman and main promoter of modern art in Nepal according to the "Nepaliness" idea, but also his figure is to be analysed with regard to his particular aspect as a "great artists", who led the traditional custom of divinising the figure of the King as a creator[299].

Similarly, the idea of the King as an artist started back in the late Licchavi period, when the Royalty adopted Sanskrit as the elite´s distinctive language for their literary activities[300]. Later, as well as the Ming Emperors of China presumed to be excellent brush painters, the Malla monarchs were said to be great writers and poets. This is the case of Bhupatindra Malla (1696-1722) who was a renowned playwrite, and used invite village troupes to exhibit their cultural performances at the court[301]. Another figure to highlight is Pratap Malla (1624-1674) who adopted the nickname of *kavita*,

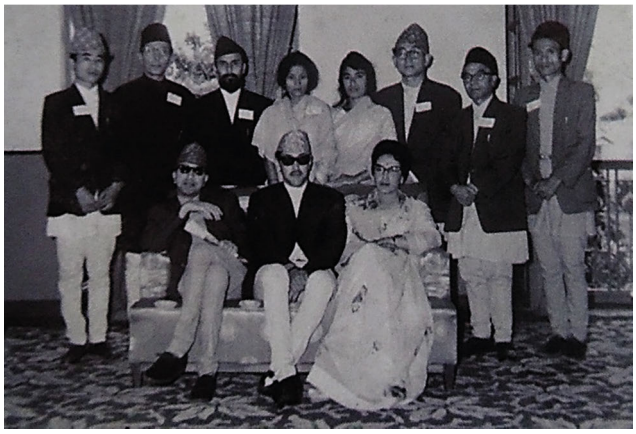


Fig. 181: Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA) committee around King Mahendra, Prince Birendra and Queen Laxmi, 1956. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2017.

[298] Lalita Malla, "*Some References of Modern Contemporary Nepali Art*. Kathmandu, 2015" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015), 4.
[299] "*Annual Journal of NAFA (1966)*"
[300] Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, 38.
[301] Toffin, *Imagination & Realities*, 192.

or "King of Poets", even if his works were of mediocre quality and merely focused on detailing Prataph´s fictitious conquests and numerous lovers[302].

Fig. 182: Prince Birendra, "Pearl," 1964. Source: Photo courtesy of Vijay Thapa, 2015.

The later can be compared with Prince Birendra´s particular case who, in spite of having been renowned as a foremost important painter, his creative career is only credited by two single, but relevant, works in the history of the country: "Pearl", 1964, and "Waterfall", 1966. The visual analysis of each of these art works is representative of two completely different styles, depending on the political moment of the time. In this sense, while "Pearl" may be described as an abstract representation with no sense of "Nepaliness" at all, the later "Waterfall" reflects a semi-realistic mountain landscape with a suitable "Nepaliness" implicit behind its modern style[303].

The mysterious "Pearl" has always been a subject of admiration and inspiration for the modern painters of Kathmandu. For instance, Lain Singh Bandgel refered to its qualities as "an immortal painting, a melody of poetic colours"[304]. Also the art critic Deepak Shimkhada defined it as "memories of mundane happenings and of a foetus, the history in the womb: A genesis. Sometimes in open nature and sometimes in dark privacy", somehow reminding us of the temple´s main sanctuary from where the divinity shines in almost absolute darkness[305].

Fig. 183: Prince Birendra, "Waterfall," 1966. Source: Thakur Prasad Mainali, ed., *NAFA Art Magazine* (1970).

On the other hand, Mr. Shimkhada´s definition of "Waterfall" is also relevant while emphasizing its clear "Nepaliness" idea through the pictorial elements inspired in the

[302] Hasrat, *History of Nepal*, 49.

[303] In spite of the relevance of these paintings for Nepalese contemporary art history, the location of these art works is currently unknown and only reproduced in a few and selected art magazines.

[304] "HM´s Keep Interest Has Inspired Nepali Artists," *The Rising Nepal*, December 2, 1977.

[305] Deepak Shimkhada, "Two Paintings of Birendra," *The Rising Nepal*, *Weekly Supplement,* July 7, 1972, 1.

mountains, and the performative aspects of the naked women bathing in nature while "enjoying the freedom of their ethnical life"[306].

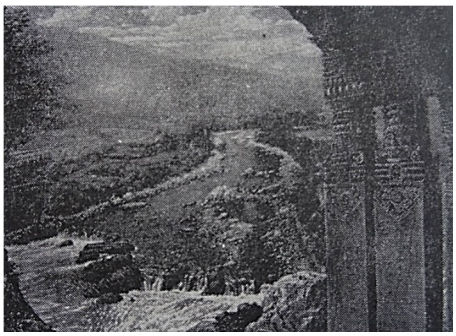


Fig. 184: Bal Krishna Sama, "*Tirsuli*," 1966. Source: Thakur Prasad Mainali, ed., *NAFA Art Magazine* (1970), 36.

This particular painting seems to have been an inspirational source for Bal Krishna Sama´s picturesque "Tirsuli", or "Waterfall", which was awarded with the prestigious Birendra Gold Medal at the *Second National Art Exhibition,* celebrated in December 1966. Coinciding with the establishment of the "Back to the Village National Campaign" in order to modernise the rural area according to the Panchayat ideals, the frame of the "Nepaliness" started to be focused on the picturesque reflection of the Himalayan countryside.

Even if intended to be Nepalese, they had a too limited grasp of the so-called traditional arts, representative of the country in the international scene. Already in the *First National Art Exhibition,* the fact that the avant-garde trend seemed to be more focused on the idea of "free creativity" was strongly criticised by Per Meyer´s relevant review, pointing out that none of the modern paintings exhibited in the show had no influence nor reflection of the local arts. In his words:

> "One is wondering whether many of these artists exhibiting are aware of the qualities of the paintings that were done before in Nepal. (Examples that may be seen at the museums at Swayambhu and Bhatgaon), there are reasons to doubt it. If this exhibition is representing the standard in art today, it is clear that the past greatly outshines the present. If they would bother themselves to study the old Nepali masters, the quality of their work would be raised"[307].

As a local response to Meyer´s critical statement, the art critic Narayan Bahadur Singh started to encourage the concept "Nepaliness" as a way to indicate the national parameters of a modern painting. According to him, "there is no way of promoting

[306] Shimkhada, "Two Paintings of Birendra," 1.
[307] "A National Art-Exhibition Analysis and Criticism", 3.

Nepalese paintings until and unless we define our Nepalese modern paintings with better clarity and contextuality"[308]. Thus, as a means to advertise the Panchayat´s "Back to the Village" political campaign, it was established that the theme depicted in a modern Nepalese painting had to be based on the symbolical representation of the country´s rural area. In a parallel way, it was also focused on the depiction of Kathmandu´s architectural aspects, due to foreigners' fascination for the country´s traditional art and culture and their influence in the Nepalese mind set.

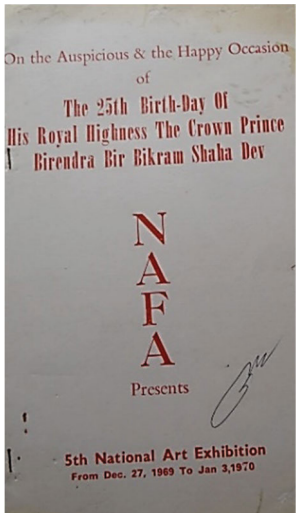


Fig. 185: Catalogue of the *Fifth National Art Exhibition*, 1969-70. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

On the other hand, while in an initial stage the "Nepaliness" was comprehended as the depiction of the natural and cultural scene of Nepal in a picturesque way, it would not be until the 1970s when this idea became inspired in the adoption and reinterpretation of the traditional creative styles of ancient Nepal, as Meyer suggested ten years back. Indeed, it would only be from the *Fifth National Art Exhibition,* celebrated in December 1969, when the category of "traditional art" was established as a new line in NAFA´s schedule, firmly focused on the arts of Kathmandu Valley, and with the *paubhā* painter Siddhi Muni Shakya (1933-2001) awarded the "Birendra Gold Medal" for "his contribution in the preservation of Nepalese culture"[309].

Consequently, it would be important to highlight that, even though at first sight the "Nepaliness" idea was influenced by the creative movement of "Indianess", or returning to India´s roots, enhanced during the anti-imperialist movements of the 20th century, both concepts developed through completely different paths. As while the search for the "Indianess" in India´s modern art was mainly concentrated on the rescue of the rural arts and crafts as symbols of the nation, the "Nepaliness" idea became exclusively focused on the art realised within Kathmandu Valley, or its picturesque scenario.

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[308] Narayan Bahadur Singh, "Nepali Paintings: Form and Distinct Features, *Annual Journal of NAFA* (1966)" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015), 16. Narayan Bahadur Singh was a popular art critic chosen by the Panchayat regime for the encouragement of the "Nepaliness" idea in modern art, and writer in *The Rising Nepal*.

[309] "HRH Crown Prince Provides Inspiration In Development Of Art. Prime Minister Opens 5th National Art Exhibition," *The Rising Nepal*, December 28, 1969.

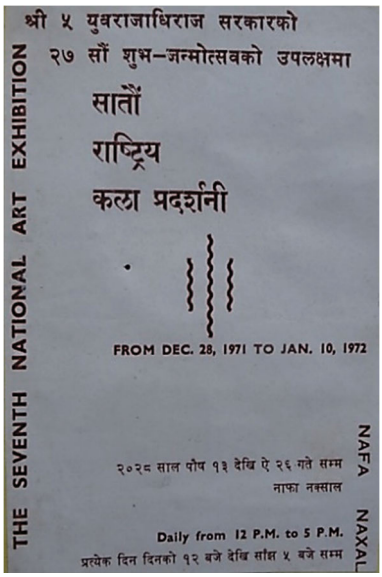

Fig. 186: Catalogue of the *Seventh National Art Exhibition*, 1971-72. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

Within this "Nepaliness" national frame the multicultural aspects of the vast territory that embraces the Kingdom of the Himalaya were hidden for a long period of time, until the fall of the Panchayat regime in 1990 and the upsurge of the "Nepalipann" idea, through which the cultures outside Kathmandu were finally acknowledged as effective sources of inspiration in the current field of contemporary art.

Fig. 187: Prime Minister Kirtinidhi Bista at the *Seventh National Art Exhibition*. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

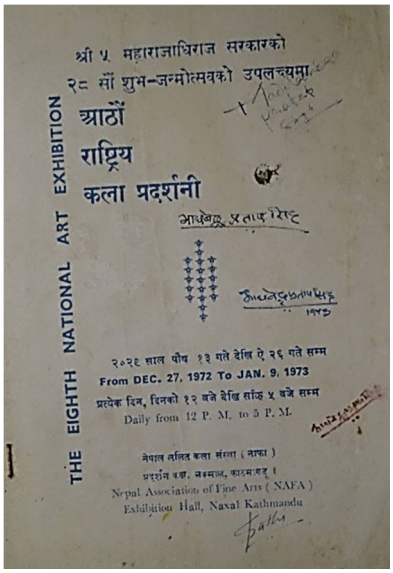

Fig. 188: Catalogue of the *Eight National Art Exhibition*, 1972-73. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

8. Imagining Nepal: "Glocalising" the picturesque idea.

> "Nepal has become the spot of fascination to the whole world with her ever fresh and original arts since the very beginning. We can point out the growing captivation of natural beauty to the whole world. Whitened Himalaya views and the hued natural surroundings of the villages in hilly areas are not less beautiful and I feel their attraction is still growing day by day." Keshava Duvadi, 1975[310].

Fig. 189: Gehendra Man Amatya, "Education is the main foundation of country´s development," c. 1964. Poster. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

The "Back to the Village National Campaign" was a political enterprise established in 1967 for the popularisation of the Panchayat ideals in the rural areas of Nepal, and a strategy to counteract the increasing influence of Communist China[311]. As part of the cultural programmes developed for such purpose, in December of the same year King Mahendra organised the *Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition* in Kathmandu, in order to spread a network of rural industries around the Kingdom in a "traditional way" and "according to Gandhi´s ideas"[312].

Indeed, due to the low literacy rates among the Nepalese population in the rural area, the use of visual arts as means of propaganda was considered of foremost importance for the creation of faithful subjects devoted to King Mahendra. In order to achieve this, the Panchayat´s Publicity Department started to produce a whole range of books, charts, stamps, maps or illustrated pamphlets, designed by renown modern artists such as Keshava Duvadi or Uttam Nepali. But also Gehendra

[310] Keshava Duvadi, "Nepalese National Arts & His Majesty King Birendra," in "*Contemporary Art and Artists of Nepal. Coronation Edition. Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA) Magazine* (1975), ed. Thakur Prasad Mainali," (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015), 107.
[311] Shriman Narayan, *India and Nepal. An exercise in Open Diplomacy* (Popular Prakashan, 1970), 84.
[312] Ibid., 39.

Man Amatya, who was trained in the art of commercial design at the Ford Foundation Centre by a german artist named Alex Waldermann, around 1960[313].

In a parallel way, as a means to support the "Back to the Village National Campaign", a large number of Nepalese artists started to turn back to the practice of picturesque landscape and easel painting, while representing the countryside´s cultural scene in an idyllic way. Consequently, by the 1970s the theme of the countryside had become the main subject addressed in the majority of the art exhibitions organised in the few art galleries that were starting to proliferate in the capital of Kathmandu.

Fig. 190: Gehendra Man Amatya, "Free from the loan or debt," c. 1956. Poster. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

According to this, in 1969 the NAC organised an open air exhibition with a selection of the realistic landscape paintings of Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, Siddi Muni Shakya, Manik Man Chitrakar, Vijay Thapa or Amar Chitrakar, which were hung on the trees in a romantic way. However, Deepak Shimkhada criticised the poor quality of these art works, indicanting that most of these picturesque paintings were done following a "commercial style", using bright colours as "obviously imitations of view cards"[314]. In order to be accepted within the movement of "modern Art" and differentiated from the tourist styles, it was established that the picturesque outlook had to be practised from the direct observation of the Himalayan natural scenery. According to Banshee Shrestha, "creative artists do not copy and imitate, but they observe nature and society, and develop their ideas, concepts and compositions. Creative artists represent their nation through their arts. On the contrary the commercial artists depend on the market"[315].

It would be through this romantic idea of the artist as the "observer of nature", how the picturesque style started to be reconsidered as a "glocalised" tool, or the result of

[313] However, the study of the art works created at the Panchayat´s Publicity Department is too limited as the majority of these documents were destroyed in a fire after the Panchayat´s fall. In Gehendra Man Amatya, personal communication with the author, July 28, 2018.

[314] Besides the participation of new promises in the Nepalese creative scenario, such as Rama Nanda Joshi, Pramila Giri, Manuj Babhu Mishtra. In Deepak Shimkhada, "NAC´s Exhibition Of Paintings," *The Rising Nepal*, May 18, 1969, 4.

[315] Banshee Shrestha, "In Praise of Creative Artists," *The Creation, Srijana College of Fine Arts*, 2006.

combining the "global" technique of picturesque realism, brought into the Himalaya by the British landscapists in the 19th century, with the "local" imagery of the village scene promoted by the "Back to the Village National Campaign"[316]. At the same time the reformulation of the village imagery in the avant-garde styles was beign carried out as part of the amalgam developed around the scenario of modern art in Kathmandu during those experimental times.

8.1. Max Gallery. From the "Back to the Village National Campaign" to Gehendra Man Amatya´s ironical abstractions.

One of the first painters that succeeded in representing the imagery of the countryside in the avant-garde style was Uttam Nepali who was awarded second prize at NAFA´s *Second National Art Exhibition* in 1966 for his original representations of the rural area in cube forms.

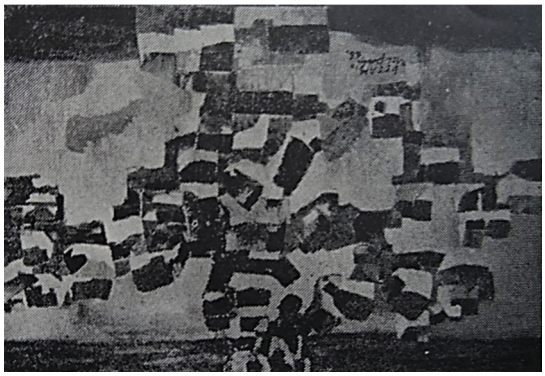

Fig. 191: Uttam Nepali´s second prize at the *Second National Art Exhibition*, 1966. Source: *"Annual Journal of NAFA* (1966)" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

Only a year later, in February 1968, Mr. Nepali organised his art exhibition *Back to the Village (Studies on Rural Life)* at the Max Gallery. As a relevant event for the promotion of this campaign, this exhibition was inaugurated by King Mahendra himself as a way of encouraging the modern works produced according to the Panchayat´s political requirements. Accordingly, in the exhibition catalogue the poet Tirtha Raj Tuladhar stated:

[316] Glocalization is a word that combines "globalisation" and "localisation". In Toffin, *Imagination & Realities,* 378.

"The Back to the Village national campaign has deep-lying significance for the artists of Nepal. To them it means that the simple joys and sorrows of the villagers, the quiet, uneventful round of their daily lives and the surrealistic atmosphere of the village scene, contains more than sufficient material for the most rewarding engagement of their creative abilities"[317].


Fig. 192: King Mahendra visits Uttam Nepali´s *Back to the Village* art exhibition in Max Gallery, 1968. Source: Photo courtesy of Uttam Nepali, 2015.

The Max Gallery must be historically highlighted as a significant alternative space opened during the hippie times in Kathmandu. It was inaugurated by Max Mathews on December 21, 1967, an Afro-American woman who was employed as a teacher at Lincoln School. During its active period in the modern art scene of Kathmandu, Max Mathews organised all sort of creative activities and exhibitions of modern art from Nepal and other countries, until the Gallery was closed in December 1968, when she decided to become a Buddhist nun, dedicating her full efforts to the opening of Khopan Monastery[318].

It has to be said that the Max Gallery couldn´t have been opened without the economic support of the *newār* businessman and art collector, Mr. Narottam Das Shrestha. Ex-owner of the Kathmandu Art Gallery in 1940, in those times Mr. Shrestha was running the popular Indira restaurant, as one of those places where both local and international dishes were served.

Fig. 194: Max Gallery´s logotype. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

[317] Tirtha Raj Tuladhar, introduction to *Uttam Nepali, Back to the Village (studies in rural life),* catalogue of an exhibition at the Max Gallery, Kathmandu, January 26 through February 4, 1968, 1.
[318] Max Matthew, e-mail message to author, July 28, 2015.

Usually visited by the hippies and foreign residents in the capital, Mrs. Mathews was one of its most faithful costumers[319].

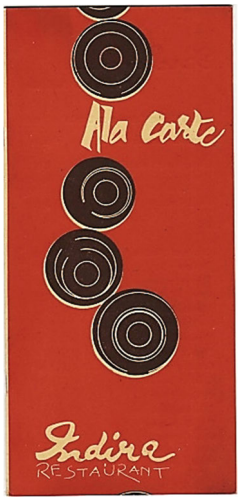

Fig. 195: Indira Restaurant´s menu, c. 1968. Front design. Source: Photo courtesy of Narottam Das Shrestha, 2015.

In spite of being an autonomous entity established apart from the political interests raised around the cultural scene of Nepal, the Max Gallery could not ignore the imminence of the "Nepaliness" ideals that had been designed to support the Panchayat´s national philosophy over the previous years. This became obvious since the Gallery´s inauguration day when, according to *The Rising Nepal*, Mrs. Mathews selected a number of modern painters who were renowned for their close collaboration with the Panchayat ideals. In this sense, Lain Singh Bangdel, who presented a "*paubhā* or painted scroll, in abstract with predominant blue", Dil Bahadur Chitrakar with his "permanent remembrances of Nepal", or Uttam Nepali with his "natural flow of lines and colours" were some of the artworks included in this exhibition[320].

Among the first international exhibitions organised at Max Gallery, the exhibition of Russian modern paintings done by anonymous Jewish artists was curated by Mrs. Mathews herself, and which were collected during her visits to Moscow´s jail before heading to Kathmandu must be highlighted[321]. However, besides a small notice published in *The Rising Nepal*, there are no other evidences, neither photographs nor catalogues of these works[322]. In the next month, the exhibition of painting reproductions coming from the Louvre Museum in Paris was of great importance as a support of the NAC´s cultural activities[323]. This was followed by an exhibition of Batiks mostly created by an Indian artisan named Mawasi Ram, whose "primitive" figures reproduced on clay had become popular among the foreign art lovers in India[324]. But it is likely that the most striking exhibition that took place in Max Gallery´s grounds was the retrospective of Anthony

[319] Narottam Das Shrestha, personal communication with the author, April 15, 2015.
[320] This article also names the sculptures of CB Manhandar, as "most interesting" pieces at Max Gallery´s inauguration show. In Marg, "Max´s Art Gallery: The Index. The Art World," *The Rising Nepal*, December 29, 1967, 3.
[321] Max Matthews e-mail message to the author, July 28, 2015.
[322] "Now Showing Contemporary Russian Paintings," *The Rising Nepal*, March 13, 1968, 5.
[323] "Art Exhibition Sponsored by French Embassy. Twenty Drawings Selected by the Louvre Museum in Paris at Max´s Gallery. 28th May to 5th June 1968," *The Rising Nepal*, May 29, 1968, 8.
[324] Keith De Folo, "The Painted Animal Show," *The Rising Nepal*, August 18, 1968, 4.

Marciano, an abstract painter from Kenya who fled from his native country to India when he was twelve years old, and whose interesting art work seems to have been also lost in time. However, thanks to De Folo´s critical statement in *The Rising Nepal* we may have a hint of the artist´s painting style. Acording to him:

> "These oils on textile are deeply involved with the personality of the artist. The dominating themes are passion and loneliness. Whether the spectator meets Anthony or not, he will feel the early suffering and frustration of the artist. What appears to be a pleasing swirl of shapes and colours frequently disguises a symbol of terror. Yet, within the heart of terror shines a glimmer of the hope an innocence of youth"[325].

Interestingly, Marciano´s violent paintings may be compared to Gehendra Man Amatya´s aggressive style, whose abstract works were presented at the Max Gallery, just after Uttam Nepali´s *Back to the Village* painting exhibition[326]. However, this event would represent one of the last exhibitions dedicated to this polemical painter, before his creative career would fall into a period of inactivity and silence for mysterious reasons. Even if his figure is nowadays denied by most of the Panchayat artists of the period, it has to be said that during these times Amatya was a renowned painter within the creative circles of Kathmandu.

In 1966, only a year before this retrospective at the Max Gallery, the figure of Amatya experimented a significant boost in the modern scene, while being the protagonist of several art exhibitions in Nepal and abroad. For instance, on the occasion of the Democracy Day, Amatya inaugurated his solo art exhibition at NAFA´s hall, in an event sponsored by the Archaeological Department, and where he presented the painting "The End of the Day". This work, whose location is unknown, must be considered as one the masterpieces of Amatya´s creative career for its outsanding quality in the abstract skills, and whose mysterious title seems to indicate the true feelings of this artists about the "democratic movement" under the Panchayat regime.

Only a few months later, Amatya organised a smaller exhibition consisting of twenty five watercolours and oil paintings in the South Gallery at the Academy of Fine

[325] Keith de Folo, "An African Painter Speaks," *The Rising Nepal*, September 4, 1968.
[326] "Rajbhandari to open one-man show paintings," *The Rising Nepal,* February 15, 1968.

Arts in Calcutta, "showing bits of Victoria Memorial hall, some residential buildings and coconut trees against the backdrop of the Bhowani temple of Kathmandu"[327]. Also some of his characteristically violent art works were shown, as it can be appreciated in fig. 197. Besides, almost at the same time of his art show in New Delhi, thirty of his watercolours were exhibited in Palm Beach, Chicago, in an event curated by Ms. Tanya Brooks and "inaugurated by the Roal Nepalese Ambassador to India, Mr. Yadu Nath Khanal, on te occasion of His Majesty´s birthday celebration", but the information available is still too limited to establish a proper analysis of it[328].

Fig. 196: Gehendra Man Amatya, "End of the Day," 1965. Acrylic. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

Fig. 197: Gehendra Man Amatya painting exhibition at the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta, 1966. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

As it has been pointed out in previous chapters, although he usually describes himself as a faithful collaborator with the Panchayat political ideas, Amatya´s disturbing paintings represent a parallel voice in the developing scenario of modern art in Kathmandu up to the current days. It is very likely that the reason for Amatya´s decadence

[327] "Paintings in Oil and Watercolour," *The Hindustan Times*, April 27, 1966.
[328] "Nepal Art Show in Chicago," *The Rising Nepal,* March 24, 1966.

in the history of Nepalese modern art was the result of the artist´s polemical views about the "Nepaliness" idea in favour of the abstract styles. For instance, at his exhibition´s catalogue in the Max Gallery, this challenging artist stated his position against the picturesque style, declaring that modern art has to be "distinguished from photographic realism", and emphasizing the strength that lay in the "originality of thought, composition pattern and experimental freedom. Chiefly reflective of the artist´s imagination and vision"[329].

Fig. 198: Gehendra Man Amatya, 1968. Acrylic. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

Indeed, in a moment when the national idea of the picturesque style was strongly highlighted as an instrument for the Panchayat´s political campaings, Amatya´s subversive interpretations of "what modern art should be" unveil his hidden aspect as an artist against the "Nepaliness" idea, and consequently against the Panchayat. One of his most significant declarations with this regard has been found in his contemporary book *Modern Art* where Amatya, after emerging back from his period of absence, states:

> "Every artist who wants to paint modern painting should forget which school they belong, whether Indian school of art or Nepalese, and start to create according to their own feelings, experimenting boldly with all techniques and styles, till they strike something which each one of them can call his very own. Every Nepalese young artist should forget that he is Nepalese. Main approach to art should be through imagination. Art to be Art must contain the heart of the artist somewhere in it"[330].

[329] *Gehendra Man Amatya. Exhibition of Paintings* (Kathmandu: Max Gallery, 1968), catalogue of an exhibition at the Max Gallery, Kathmandu, February 17 through 23, 1968.

[330] Amatya, Gehendra Man. "*Modern Art*. Kathmandu: Amatya Publications, 2005" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015), 7- 9.

8.2. Park Gallery: A hub for the picturesque. Naturalism and easel painting for preserving Kathmandu´s cultural heritage.

> "We need to reflect figures, images, symbols from our own culture and society which they understand and enjoy and from which they get peace and pleasure according to their aesthetic senses." Rama Nanda Joshi[331].

Right after Max Gallery closed its doors in 1969, Uttam Nepali inaugurated the Prithvi Art Gallery in a new wing of the luxurious Lal Durbar as an alternative space for the promotion of modern art in Nepal, and thanks to the financial support of Mr. Narayan Shumshere Rana. However, in comparison to the Max Gallery´s groundbreaking activities in modern Kathmandu, Prithvi Art Gallery´s art exhibitions were limited to two single retrospectives. The first one of Uttam Nepali, opened on April 25[332]. And the second one of Urmila Upadhayay Garg, inaugurated on August 26 by the French Ambassador, about which no further information has been found[333].

Fig. 199: Prithvi Art Gallery´s inauguration, 1969. Source: Photo courtesy of Uttam Nepali, 2015.

Nevertheless, the most significant activity taking place at Prithvi Art Gallery was the art exhibition set up for its inauguration day, on January 10, 1969, established to honour the celebrations organised for Prithvi Narayan Shah´s birthday, as the unifier of the nation[334]. Here, apart from a careful selection of art works of renowned Nepalese painters such as Bal Krishna Sama, Lain Singh Bangdel, Kalidash Shrestha, K.K. Karmacharya and Uttam Nepali, the picturesque trend was portrayed through the realistic mountain images of Mrs. Inger Lissanevich and the naturalist works

[331] Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi*, 31.
[332] "Prithvi Art Gallery Invited You To Visit The Exhibition of Paintings by Uttam Nepali," *The Rising Nepal,* April 25, 1969.
[333] "Graphic Art Exhibition Inaugurated," *The Rising Nepal*, August 26, 1969, 1.
[334] "Prithvi Art Gallery Opened," *The Rising Nepal*, January 11, 1969, 2-8.

of B.R. Gujar from Mumbai, whose retrospective had taken place at Mr. Boris Lissanevich´s Royal Hotel a few years back[335].

Fig. 200: Park Gallery´s first logo. Source: Banshee Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art* (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006).

As it has been said, through the decade of the 1970s the picturesque styles were particularly promoted among the modern artists of Nepal as an ideal way to represent the country according to the "Nepaliness" idea, and support of the Panchayat´s "Back to the Village" political campaign. Since the Prithvi Art Gallery had a very short life in the creative scenario of Kathmandu, closing in the same year of its opening, the most relevant institution in the encouragement of the art of picturesque painting was the Park Gallery. This gallery was inaugurated in 1968 by the young painter Rama Nanda Joshi (1938-1988), initially set up in a frame shop at Ratna Park owned by a foreigner named Peter Cross, but later moving to Pulchow area where it is currently established[336]. R.N. Joshi must be highlighted as one of the most relevant promoters of the picturesque outlook during the Panchayat period. However, at he beginning of his career he was trained in the avant-garde style at the Sir J.J. School of Arts in Mumbai, thanks to one of the Liberal Art Grants which were being offered as part of the Colombo Plan during those times, coinciding with the Nepalese painter Laxman Shrestha[337].

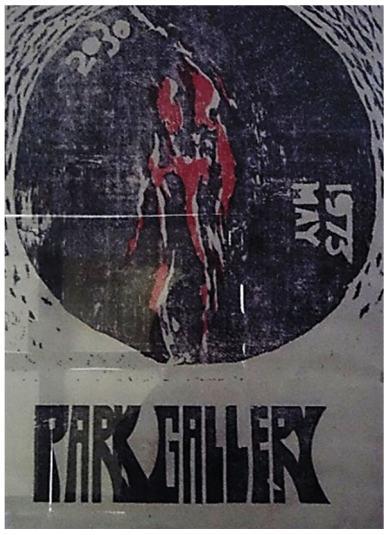

Fig. 201: Gehendra Man Amatya, Park Gallery´s poster design, 1973. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

Just after returning to Nepal in 1964, Joshi organised his first art exhibition at the Nepal-Bharat Sankritik Kendra with a series of outstanding abstract paintings, which were remarkably far from the picturesque style adopted during the later development of his creative career[338]. One of his most popular works in those early times was the painting

[335] "Gujar´s Painting Show Opened." *The Rising Nepal*, December 10, 1967.
[336] Nabin Joshi personal communication with the author, January 11, 2015.
[337] This plan was created in 1950 for the development of Asia and the Pacific regions of the world. In "The Colombo Plan." Accessed March 3, 2016. http://www.colombo-plan.org/
[338] *One Man Show Exhibition of Paintings by Rama Nanda Joshi*, catalogue of an exhibition at the Nepal-Bharat Sankritik Kendra, Kathmandu, November 28 through December 4, 1964.

"War and Famine, Life Goes On", dated from 1963, and where we can see the figure of a man with a woman ridding a starving buffalo, as a symbolical way to reflect the sad aftermaths of the Second World War in India.

In addition, R.N. Joshi´s early tendency to use dark blue colours as a way to emphasize the miserable environment, indicates that during his youth as a student in Mumbai, he was possibly aware of Lain Singh Bangdel´s "Muna Madan" series of paintings and the remarkable impact that these artworks had in the modern art scene of Nepal. This explains why "War and Famine" was awarded with the second prize at the *First National Art Exhibition* in 1965, in a similar way to the mentioned case of Durga Baral and his early inspiration in Bangdel´s drawing style[339].

Fig. 202: Rama Nanda Joshi, "The stream of life in spite of famine and war," 1963. Oil on canvass. © Collection of Rama Nanda Joshi Museum. Source: Banshee Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art* (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006), 62.

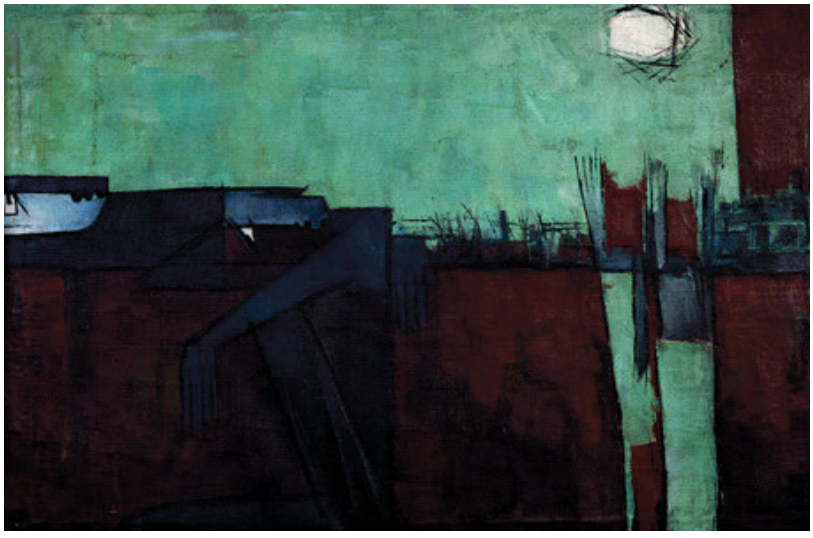

Fig. 203: Rama Nanda Joshi, 1963. Oil. © Collection of Rama Nanda Joshi Museum. Source: Photo courtesy of Nabin Joshi, 2015.

[339] However, during his interview Nabin Joshi insisted that his father had a completely different perspective from Lain Singh Bangdel´s, and that he was inspired in the Blue Period of Picasso, but never in Bangdel. In Nabin Joshi, personal communication with the author, May 11, 2015.

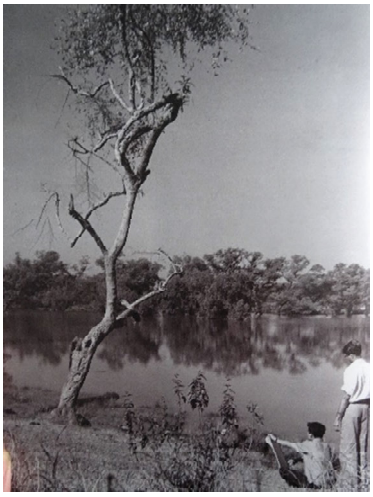

Fig. 204: R. N. Joshi painting in nature. Source: Banshee Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art* (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006).

Besides, same as it was the case with many other artists in the previous years, since the onset of R. N. Joshi´s creative career King Mahendra demonstrated a particular interest for his figure as a modern painter. During a formal meeting with the artist at the Royal Palace, R.N. Joshi obtained full support from the Nepalese Royal House when stating his desire to "serve the nation and the King", and contribute to the preservation of the traditional art of Nepal "through the establishment of a proper educative system on Fine Arts" [340].

It was for this purpose that the Park Gallery organised the "Evening Art Class", a hub for art creativity which encouraged the young Nepalese painters to obtain direct inspiration from the Himalayas and cultural valleys of Nepal, practising easel painting in the countryside, following the legacy of the British artists in the 19th century[341]. This would lead to the developing style of many relevant artists in the coming years towards the picturesque idea, such as Kiran Manandhar (1957) who was educated at the "Evening Art Class" over his youth. Hence, Park Gallery was a pioneer enterprise that proved the influence that the cultural institution, the art gallery and the Fine Arts education system had as a powerful way of driving the development of modern art according to the political aims operating in those times.

The picturesque outlook in the Fine Arts educative system of Nepal would be officially set up in 1968, when R.N. Joshi joined forces with the modern sculptors Pramila Giri (1946) and Thakur Prasad Mainali (1935) in order to open the Lalitkala Mahavidhyala. This academy was presented to the King as a new Fine Arts centre derived from NAFA, and where the subjects of realistic painting, sculpture and graphic arts were imparted according to the "Nepaliness" idea. Even if the Lalitkala Mahavidyala had a very short life, it is historically relevant as the base from where the Lalitkala Campus developed a few years later, and as part of Tribhuvan University´s academic programme.

[340] "The Last Glimpse of the Memorable Meeting. Ramananda Joshi." (Trans. Nabin Joshi. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).
[341] Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi.*

Fig. 205: "R. N. Joshi advocating for preservation of Sankhamul Ghat," 1986. Source: Banshee Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art* (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006), 25.

Its teaching methodology, based on the picturesque style, was obvious since its establishment when, in 1974, the Lalitkala organised student's art exhibition with more than five hundred watercolors and clay sculptures "inspired in the Himalayan natural scenario"[342]. According to *The Rising Nepal*, by 1976 this school had more than three hundred students who could decide between "music, dance, sculpture and painting as their subject held", but always attempting to project "the glorious national heritage of Nepal"[343].

It was following this trend how R.N. Joshi abandoned his early expressionist syle in order to adopt the picturesque realism as the best way to depict the country´s traditional scene. By doing this, he intended to fight the imminent problem of environmental pollution and the consequent destruction of the rich heritage of the Himalaya, such as the "Save Bagmati" movement in which he worked for the preservation of the holy river and the protection of its environment[344]. Possibly a consequence of the observation of Kathmandu´s cultural scene, Joshi´s Park Gallery started to underline the relevant role that the traditional arts and crafts of Nepal played for the enrichment of the national culture and its projection towards the rest of the world, organising an exhibition of religious *paubhā* and Thangka paintings in August 1986[345].

Fig. 206: Rama Nanda Joshi, "Shree Ganesh the Lord of Mind," 1980. © Birendra Art Gallery Collection. Source: Banshee Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art* (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006), 90.

Thus, as well as many other collaborators did during the last stages of the Panchayat period -

[342] "Art Exhibition Inaugurated," *The Rising Nepal*, June 21, 1974, 1-8.

[343] "Marked Increase in Fine Arts Students." *The Rising Nepal,* September 11, 1976.

[344] Therefore R.N. Joshi was one of the pioneer Nepalese creators in using modern art against the present issue of pollution and climate change. In Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi,* 29.

[345] "Urge to Provide Opportunities To Artists," *The Rising Nepal*. August 23, 1984, 1-6.

including Thakur Prasad Mainali, Pramila Giri or even Kiran Manandhar- in the later stages of his career Joshi would end up turning his picturesque styles back to abstraction, this time inspired in the trend of the "neo-tantric" painting style. Already sinde the 1960´s this movement had "emerged as a potentially sustainable alternative to the western abstraction" in India, where the "neo-tantric" scene was leaded by renowned artists such as Ajit Mukherjee (1915-1990)[346].

Despite the influences coming from india with regard to this field, this work analyses how these new abstractions were developed also as a consequence of the foreigner´s increasing fascination for the ancient wonders of Nepal, and specially the hippie styles in Freak Street. Significantly, Abbhi Subedi points out the relevance of the wall paintings of one of the last hippie dens found in Kathmandu, dated of the 1960s, where we can see the design of a mandala, and also "the images and icons of Mahadeva and his consort Parvati, mantras and Sanskrit benedictions"[347].

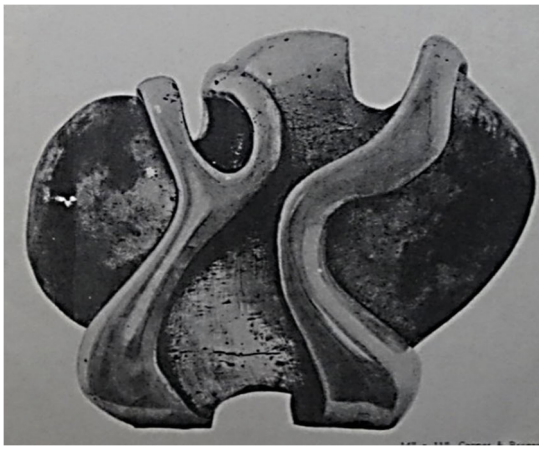

Fig. 207: Pramila Giri, 1982. Source: *Meditation and Reflections. Pramila Giri,* catalogue of an exhibition at NAFA, Kathmandu, May 21, 1982.

Consequently, as it had happened with the picturesque outlook and its reapropriation during the Rana period, it could be stated that the "neo-tantric" trends were adopted by the Nepalese modern creators as new reformulations of the foreigness and process of "Occidentalisation", adopting the symbologies represented in *paubhā* and Thangka painting, and presented as another way of "glocalising" the foreign styles according to the "Nepaliness" idea.

[346] In the 1960s Mukherjee organised a successful exhibition of Tantra art in the West, and later in 1984-86 another one which toured around Europe and North America. In Wasim Mushtaq Wani, "Neo-Tantric Movement in India: An Overview," *Thrid Front, Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3 (2016): 49.
[347] Shekhar Kharel, "Kathmandu Odyssey," video, 35 min, accessed May 3, 2018, http://www.cultureunplugged.com/storyteller/Shekhar_Kharel#/myFilms

8.3. From the "magic surrealism" to the international "transvangarde". New creative steps in the 1980s.

> "I have never lost deep interest in the glorious Nepalese tradition of art and culture which has always been a source of inspiration for my creativity to this date." Manohar Man Poon, 1985.[348]

Besides the Lalitkala Mahavidyala and its focus on the technique of picturesque landscaping, in the early 1970s the Nepalese had no other choices for learning the avant-garde styles that were becoming popular all around the world. It was due to this reason that many young artists were compelled to receive their Fine Arts studies in foreign universities, mainly in Russia and India, introducing in Nepal different influences and painting styles that characterised the chaotic scene of modern art in those times.

Under this view, the cultural relations between the Soviet Union and Nepal began during the initial stages of King Mahendra´s rule, and the establishment of the Nepal-Russia Friendship Society in 1957, coinciding with this symbolical event a number of renowned Nepalese poets, such as Siddhicharan Shrestha and Bhupi Sherchan (1937-1990), were sent to participate in the *International Youth Festival*, celebrated in Moscow in June of that year[349].

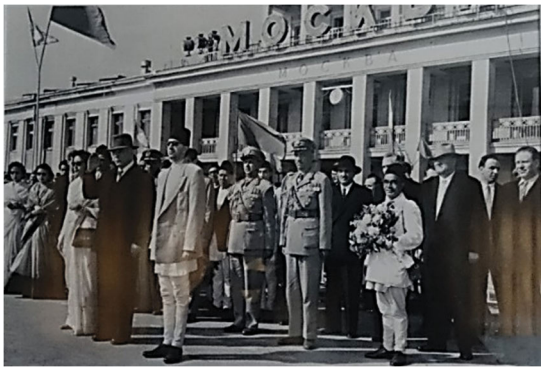

Fig. 208: State visit of King Mahendra and Queen Ratna to URSS, Moscow Airport, 1958. Source: Photo courtesy of Santosh Maskey, 2017.

Of great relevance was the organisation of Chandra Man Singh Maskey´s art exhibition in this city, which occured in the same period as King Mahendra´s official tour to the Soviet Union in 1958[350]. Among the picturesque scenes presented in this event, "The Wedding" is to be highlighted as one of Maskey´s masterpieces in which the artist represents the traditional aspects of a Nepalese engagement, succeeding in the

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[348] *Manohar Man Poon, Shashi Kala Tiwari, Jagadish Chitrakar. An Exhibtion of Contemporary Nepalese Art,* catalogue of an exhibition at The October Gallery, London, May 30 through June 29, 1985.

[349] Hutt, *The Life of Bhupi Sherchan,* 36.
Malla, *Politics of Foreign Aid,* 198.

combination the Western creative styles with the precision of Mughal miniature, in a similar style to his Buddhist paintings presented at the *Fourth World Buddhist Conference* in 1956.

Also during King Birendra´s rule the relations between Russia and Nepal were reinforced by several cultural events organised by relevant modern painters and poets[351]. For instance, in 1976 a collective art exhibition of NAFA artists was organised in Moscow, where a total forty-one modern and traditional paintings and sculptures displayed[352]. This event coincided with Maskey´s art exhibition at Frunze, Tajikistan, as a way to conmmemorate the 20th anniversary of the Soviet-Nepalese relations[353]. And only a few years later, in 1979, *The Moscow Artists* exhibition was organised at the RNA´s hall[354].

Fig. 209: Chandra Man Singh Maskey, "Wedding ceremony," c. 1950. Oil on canvas. © The Museum of Oriental Art. Source: Myzeu, Nepal, accessed February 10, 2016, http://museums.artyx.ru/books/item/f00/s00/z0000008/st032.shtml

As a consequence of this round trip cultural exchange, the Russian Government started to grant special scholarships to some Nepalese painters so as to receive their formal training in the URSS. This was the case of Ram Kumar Bhaukajee (c. 1950) and Bipin Guimirey (c. 1950) who, thanks to this economic aid in 1977 could receive their fine arts studies at the Moscow State Academic Art Institute. Influenced by the Socio Realistic movement that characterised Russian art in those days, Ram Kumar Bhaukajee mixed the architectural aspects of Kathmandu´s cultural heritage with the onion domes

[351] For this purpose, in 1972-73 Bhupi Sherchan paid his second visit to the Soviet Union to attend the needs of the Nepal-Russia Friendship Society, on behalf of the RNA. In Hutt, *The Life of Bhupi Sherchan*, 141.

[352] According to this article, this event was organised by the surreal painter Shashi Bikram Shah. In "Nepalese Art Exhibition To Be Held In URSS," *The Rising Nepal*, July 19, 1976, 3.

[353] Bhaukajee, "*Contemporary Paintings of Nepal*."

[354] *The Moscow Artists presents An Exhibition of Paintings and Graphic Works* (Kathmandu: The Royal Nepal Academy and the Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA), 1979), catalogue of an exhibition at the NAFA exhibition hall, February 6 through 12, 1979.

of the Russian palaces and churches, while Bipin Guimirey´s works focused on nostalgic depictions of the marginalised class of Nepal[355]. However it could be said that, while working the faculty of imagination in most of these hybrid cultural landscapes, both painters have to be renowned as the introducers of the "magic surrealism" style as a new branch in the development of modern art of Nepal, and also as a derivation of the "magic realism" popularised in India through relevant figures such as K.G. Subramanyan (1924-2016), during the same period of time[356].

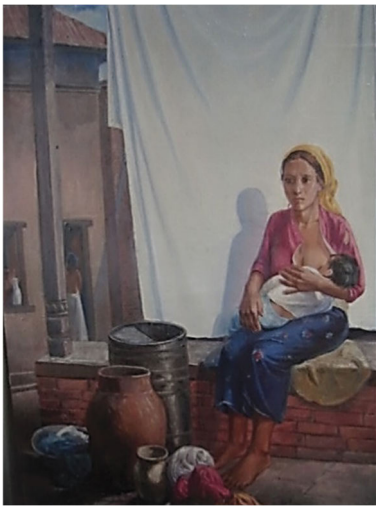

Fig. 210: Bipin Guimirey, c. 1970. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Fig. 211: Ram Kumar Bhaukajee, c. 1970. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Nowadays a renowned historian and critic in the postmodern art scenario of Kathmandu, Ram Kumar Baukhajee was a faithful follower of the picturesque idea since the initial stages of his career. Some years before heading to Moscow, he took part in Park Gallery´s *Second Exhibition of Landscape Painting*, celebrated in December 1973 as part of the celebrations of King Birendra´s birthday, where also the participation of Manohar Man Poon and his outstanding representations of the Kathmandu Valley´s cultural sites should not be omitted[357].

Underlining the role of modern art for the preservation of Kathmandu´s cultural aspects at this time, this exhibition´s catalogue states the influence that the Panchayat´s

[355] Kamal Kshetry, "Realism in Bipin Ghimire´s Paintings," (Thesis, Tribhuvan University, 2014).
[356] Fernández del Campo, *El Arte de India*, 422.
[357] "Exhibition of Landscape Painting To Be Held In Celebration of His Majesty´s Birthday," *The Rising Nepal*, December 7, 1972.

developing ideals had in the production of these picturesque scenes, highlighting the fact that they were "originated and inspired by the very thoughts and directives given by His Majesty for the National Development Campaign"[358].

Significantly, the *Exhibitions of Landscape Painting* at Park Gallery were usually organised thanks to the support of the Young Artists Group (YAG), a creative organisation conformed in 1973 by a number of students of the new Lalitkala Campus, faithfully trained in the picturesque outlook of landscapism, and whose main theme was the intercourse of creative tours around Nepal for "broadening the horizon of the knowledge and experience about the nature and the people of the country"[359].

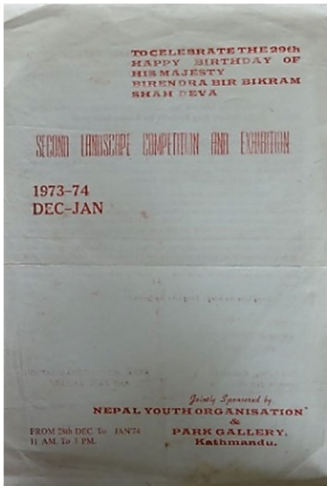

Fig. 212: *Second Landscape Competition and Exhibition* catalogue of an exhibition at the Park Gallery, 1973-74. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

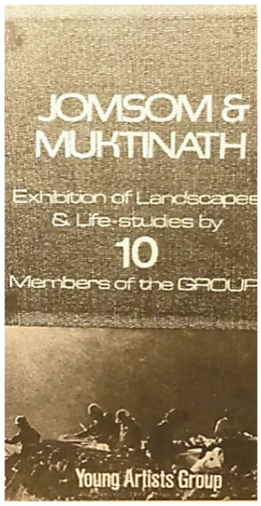

Fig. 213: *Jomsom & Muktinath. Exhibition of Landscapes & Life-studies*, 1984. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of the autor, 2015.

At the same time as the picturesque idea was promoted at the university level, as a way to support the "Back to the Village National Campaign" and the Panchayat system, the RNA started to work for the encouragement of these painting styles also in the rural area, and even organising adjointed Academies and art exhibitions with the aim of promoting the Nepalese art and literature in district areas "according to the wishes of the King"[360]. For instance, in 1976 as the Youth Art Centre in Dharan was inaugurated, with the landscapist Karna Man Singh Maskey (1937) appointed Chairman, during his membership of the SOMA artists group. This was an artists group established in the 1960s by Lain Singh Bangdel, to teach the realistic styles and techniques of colour and perspective to a selected group

[358] *Second Landscape Competition and Exhibition*, (Kathmandu: Park Gallery, 1973-74), catalogue of an exhibition at the Park Gallery, Kathmandu, December through January, 1973-74.
[359] *Jomsom & Muktinath. Exhibition of Landscapes & Life-studies by 10 Member of the Young Artists Group,* (Kathmandu: Palpasa Art Gallery, 1984), catalogue of an exhibition at the Palpasa Art Gallery, Kathmandu, January 2, 1984.
[360] "Mid-Western Region´s Art Exhibit Opened," *The Rising Nepal*, March 11, 1988, 3.

of Nepalese artists, with a significant emphasis on the natural landscape as the main inspiration for modern art[361].

However, as it has been said soon the picturesque idea would also be hybridicised with the faculty of imagination, characteristic of the local culture of Nepal. Hence, the "magic surrealism" arose as the better way to represent these enchanting Himalayan scenes with its characteristic imaginative sense. One of the most relevant art galleries that supported the "magic surreal" painting style in Kathmandu was the October Gallery at the Vajra Hotel. Inaugurated in 1980 by Mrs. Sabina Lemon, as an affiliated institution to the October Gallery in London, it is provided a significant bridge of connexion between the modern creators of Nepal and the international world. Besides its exhibition hall, the October Gallery also offered the Studio-7, where several theatrical companies performed their acts in English, interpreting the historical events of ancient Nepal in "magical" ways[362].

An assiduous collaborator with the Studio-7´s enterprise, the Nepalese modern painter Jagadish Chitrakar (1947) used to be hired by this Galley as a designer of the picturesque backgrounds needed for its theatrical stages[363]. Highly influenced by the hippie style legacy in Kathmandu, Jagadish´s superb works of art were characterised by surreal and psychedelic depictions of the Valley´s cultural scenery.

Fig. 214: Jagadish Chitrakar working on a backdrop for Sudio-7, c. 1981. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

[361] Naresh Sundar Sainju, personal communication with the author, January 11, 2015.
[362] Hotel Vajra. "The October Gallery." Accessed July 16, 2017. https://hotelvajra.com/
[363] Son of the renowned painter Amar Chitrakar, Jagadish learnt the picturesque techniques of modern art form his own father during his youth.

Fig. 215: Jagadish Chitrakar, "Art of washing the sari," 1981. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

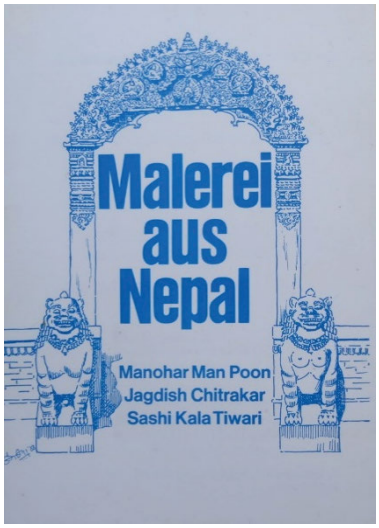

Fig. 216: *Malerei aus Nepal* exhibition catalogue, 1988. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2017.

These paintings, defined by the October Art Gallery as "oils of the rooftop landscapes of Bhaktapur and sequences of disturbed dramas that fuse places, peoples and actions", were chosen by a young art historian from Germany, Dr. Susanne von der Heide, to participate in a collective art exhibition of modern art from Nepal that moved from the October Gallery in London, 1985, to the IfA Galerie in Bonn, Germany, in 1988[364]. Along with Jagadish Chitrakar´s surreal scenarios, the picturesque depictions of Manohar Man Poon, and the expressionist paintings of Shashikala Tiwari (1950) In this sense, Poon was praised in foreign countries for his "form, line and colour all wielded with a delicate but uncompromising mastery to render a specific rasa of Nepali culture"[365]. While Shashikala´s Buddhist scenes were popularised while comparing "bright fluid works" with "the intensity of Munch"[366].

[364] This was stated during Jagadish´s solo art exhibition at the October Art Gallery in September 1981. In Elisabeth Christ, "A Flourish of Contemporary Colors," *The Rising Nepal*, March 4, 1988.
[365] Bill Boyd, introduction to *Manohar Man Poon, Shashi Kala Tiwari, Jagadish Chitrakar. An Exhibtion of Contemporary Nepalese Art.*
[366] "Contemporary Nepalese Art," *City Limits Magazine*, June 21-27, 1985.

Fig. 217: Manohar Man Poon, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2017.

Fig. 218: Shashikala Tiwari, "Daya," c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Fig. 219: Inauguration of the exhibition *Malerei Aus Nepal* in Germany, 1988. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2017.

This successful event, visited by many art lovers from both countries, was significantly introduced in the exhibition catalogue as a "transvangarde". In other words, the result of a round trip process of influences and "glocalisation" where these experimental artists "exposed themselves to other cultures and then turned back to their original inspirational source"[367]. Therefore, through the course of this chapter it has been pointed out how the picturesque style of painting firmly established by the Rana rulers in Nepal as an ideal way of portraying themselves as the "rulers of the Himalaya", was also used during the Panchayat as a means to advertise the regime´s national campaign while encouraging it towards the representation of the cultural imaginary of ancient *Nepāl*. In adition to this, it states how the faculty of imagination must be taken into account in order to analyse such "transvantgarde" round trip process of influences, departing from the

[367] *Manohar Man Poon, Shashi Kala Tiwari, Jagadish Chitrakar. An Exhibtion of Contemporary Nepalese Art,* catalogue of an exhibition at The October Gallery, London, May 30 through June 29, 1985.

picturesque outlook and returning back to the “magic surrealism” reflected in the imagery of ancient Kathmandu Valley.

In other words, in a comparable way to the picturesque, but imaginative, styles promoted by Henri Ambrose Oldfileld during his scientific studies of the architectural aspects of the Kathmandu Valley in the 19th century, the “magic surrealism” emerged as a consequence of the idyllic enviroment that backed up the idea of Nepal as a nation-state, and as a new way of represent the political scenario of Kathmandu through a metaphorical voice. Hence, once the violent painting style, developed by polemic artists such as Amatya, Bhandari or Subba, had been substituted by Lain Singh Bangdel´s picturesque school and its suitable “Nepaliness” established around the representation of these idyllic mountains in abstract ways, the “magic surrealism” emerged as a middle path through which the picturesque “Nepaliness” was used as a way to shield the suble irony that seems to be hiden in the lonely cultural scapes created by some of the mentioned painters, such as Ram Kumar Bhaukajee, Jagadish Chitrakar or Manohan Man Poon.

Part Four

Behind the mountain´s smile

> "Everything conspires to make Kathmandu a muddle, an absurd city, a city without walls, a city without a symbol. Today at the heart of Kathmandu all the Rana prime ministers stand in an undisturbed bronze repose and shed dark tears of satisfaction at the consummated perfection of their fantasy. Kathmandu is flooded with the tourists who come to see the last stretch of Orient, hoping to find still the mystique of its forbidden city. But they go back disenchanted, telling the world that Kathmandu is not waiting for tourist, but for comedians, satirists and cartoonists." Kamal P. Malla, 1979[368].

After more than two decades of adaptation and establishment of the avant-garde styles in Nepalese art, it was around the 1970s when the new creative scenario found its way while being completely focused on the national goals of representing the Kingdom of the Himalaya as a modern country, and the figure of the King as the central point of the nation-state and main inspiration for the country´s cultural development.

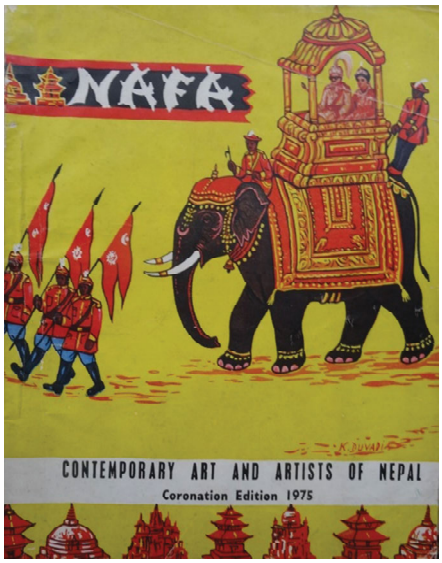

Fig. 220: Keshava Duvadi, Coronation catalogue, 1975. Front cover. Source: *Contemporary Arts and Artists of Nepal. Coronation edition 1975, e*dited by Takhur Prasad Mainali (Kathmandu: Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA), 1975), catalogue of an exhibition at the Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA), 1975.

For King Birendra´s coronation, in July 1974, the NAFA organised the *National Development Exhibition* as a way of worshipping the new monarch through an amalgam of realistic, abstract and surreal artworks, idealised to promote the Panchayat´s developing goals. For instance when Pramila Giri presented her modern sculpture "Coronation", as a representation of

[368] Kamal. P. Malla, *The Road to Nowhere. A Selection of Writings 1966-1977* (Lalitpur: Sajha Publications, 1979), 222.

"the supreme respect and faith of the Nepalese people for the crown", in the same way Takhur Prasad Mainali sculpted "Education", in order to emphasize the relevance of the educative system for the development of the Nepalese population[369].

Fig. 221: Thakur Prasad Mainali, "Education," 1975. Coronation Garden, Kirtipur. Source: Hans Bjonness, "A work for creativity in Arts and Society," 1980.

Fig. 222: Pramila Giri, "Coronation," 1975. Coronation Garden, Kirtipur. Source: Hans Bjonness, "The courage to be as oneself," 1980.

After King Birendra´s coronation day, a significant amount of changes started to occur in the creative scenario of Kathmandu. Due to the legal abolishment of drug abuse in 1973, the hippie era began to disappear, replaced by a new and healthier tourist enterprise, mainly focused on trekking and wildlife tourism[370]. In this way the new area of Pokhara, originally known as Baidam, started to be formed and defined by Tony Hagen as one of the most beautiful places of the country for its mountain views[371]. Also, with regard to the developing scene of modern art in Kathmandu, King Birendra made significant changes in this field by moving NAFA and the *National Art Exhibitions* into the RNA premises, in order to redirect the avant-garde literary and visual styles towards a single movement, fully "Panchayat oriented". Following the Chancellor, Kedar Man Byathit, words in 1970, "modern art should serve for the unification of the multicultural country of Nepal"[372].

[369] Hans Bjonness, "A work for creativity in Arts and Society", 1980.
[370] Liechty, *Far Out*, 271.
[371] Prakash A. Raj, *Crisis of Identity in Nepal* (Varanasi: Pilgrims Publishing, 2007), 42.
[372] Byathit "Nepalese Culture Should Be Panchayat Oriented," *The Rising Nepal*, December 18, 1970.

Indeed, since the NAFA came under the RNA a closer collaborative practice between the visual and literary arts of Nepal, until then completely separated, was established. For instance, in the same way as the prolific writer Indra Rai created the *Tesro Ayam*, or "Three dimensional movement" in 1963, the modern painter Uttam Nepali used the same ideas, presenting a new series of abstract works entitled *Poetry & Painting* at NAFA´s exhibition hall, just before its merging with the RNA[373].

Fig. 223: Uttam Nepali and Queen Aishwarya in *Poetry & Painting* exhibition, 1975. NAFA. Source: *Uttam Nepali. Celebrating 46 Years of Creativity*, (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2004), catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, March 21 through April 7, 2004.

However, these unexpected changes caused a huge deal of disturbance among the general community of visual artists belonging to the NAFA during that time. For this reason, in January 1980, the Nepal Academy of Fine Art Foundation Committee was created, so as to return NAFA as an independent institution from the RNA. But in spite of their subversive thoughts, the members of this Committee had no other choice but to be faithful to the unquestionable decisions of the Royal House, and many of its members collaborated more than once with the RNA by organising of their art exhibitions at its hall[374].

On the other hand, it has to be said that while in the 1960s the literary background of Nepal was focused on the recovery of mythological references and ancient images, by the 1970s literary art started to become a medium of expression for social criticism, such as it had happened during the end of the Rana regime. According to Proffesor Hutt, in 1974 the *Boot Polish* was organised a sort of performance in which the littérateurs of

[373] *Poets Poetry & Painting. Painting exhibition by Uttam Nepali,* catalogue of an exhibition at NAFA, Kathmandu, September 11 through 18, 1975. The *Tesro Ayam* movement consisted of the dismantlement of the logical sense of the text, as if it were an abstract canvass.
[374] In "Need To Promote Nepali Art and Culture Stressed," *The Rising Nepal*, April 14, 1985.

Nepal cleaned the shoes of the passer-by's in New Road, as a form of protest against the "Back to the Village National Campaign" and the censorship of many newspapers and magazines. And in 1979 the *Street Poets Revolution* gathered around two thousand Litterateurs who recited their ironical works in the streets of Kathmandu while openly claiming for the end of the Panchayat regime, ending up with violent disturbances and the national referendum of 1981. Nevertheless, the Panchayat system got absolute victory, and the censorship was even more tightened[375].

Fig. 224: Lain Singh Bangdel as Chancellor of the Royal Nepal Academy, 1984. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2017.

Departing from this unstable environment, the following chapter analyses the last avant-garde tendencies of ironical cartoon developed during King Birendra´s rule, following the hypothesis that this critical scenario also affected the developing aspects of visual arts. Thus it is stated that, as a way of collaborating with the demands raised by the literary movement, the young Nepalese creators started to use the power of visual art in a metaphorical way, to skip censhorphip and exercise the freedom of expression, but always following the "Nepaliness" idea in a superficial way. However, it must be said that such hypothesis has never been fully confirmed by any of these artists during the process of fieldwork.

Fig. 225: Durga Baral, "Mother and child," 1975. Source: *Samayako Anuhar Ra Sambedanaka Rangaharu. Durga Baral* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2004) catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2004, 9.

[375] Michael Hutt, ed., *Nepal in the Nineties. Versions of the Past, Visions of the Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 85-86.

9. Art and politics. Satirical creations towards postmodern Nepal.

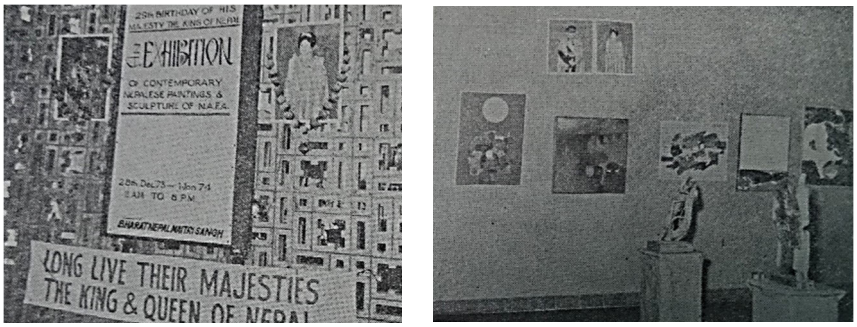

Fig. 226: An Exhibition of *Contemporary Nepalese Paintings and Sculptures* in New Delhi, Shridharani Art Gallery, December 28, 1973, through January 1, 1974." Source: Souvenir *of the Bharat Nepal Annual,* 1974.

When analysing the *Contemporary Nepalese Sculptures and Paintings* exhibition at the Shridharani Art Gallery in New Delhi, in 1973, *The Indian Express* highlighted the enromous variety of painting styles as "confusing"[376]. Indeed, during the 1970s both the picturesque style of painting and the avant-garde techniques were promoted at the same time, as means to represent the country´s cultural scenario and promote the Panchayat´s developing ideals in national and international ways. However, the aim of these creations was never focused on developing a homogeneous aesthetic movement, but to represent Nepal through a unique creative style different from the others through the "Nepaliness" idea.

Besides the use of picturesque and avant-garde styles the "Nepaliness" was also developed through a third branch, as a response to the foreigners´ increasing fascination for the *newār* and Tibetan religious paintings. As a consequence of this, already in the *National Development Exhibition* celebrated for King Birendra´s coronation day, a significant selection of traditional works were presented as, according to the catalogue,

[376] Narayan Bahadur Singh, "*The History of Contemporary Nepali Painting*. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy, 1976" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015) 216.

"a matter of appreciation to the foreigners too"[377]. Also the Fine Art Foundation Committee played a significant role as a cultural initiative that tried to protect and preserve the heritage of Nepal, by organising a few art exhibitions of both modern and traditional art[378]. This was the way in which the "neo-traditional" creative styles started to come up in the "Nepaliness" creative frame, such as the beautiful "neo-thangkas" of Binod Moktan, whose "sharp and well defined" artworks were exhibited at the October Gallery in 1990[379]. Also, the "neo-tantra" style initially promoted in the Kathmandu Valley by the original works of Batsa Gopal Vaida (1945) who, during his collaboration with the SKIB-71 artists group, contributed in this way to the introduction of the "neo-traditional" styles in the country.

Fig. 227: Binod Moktan, 1990. Acrylic. © Collection of Vajra Hotel. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

According to this, the following chapter focuses on the amalgam of painting styles developed from the 1970s by the members of the SKIB-71 and the Junkiree artists group, after receiving their training at the Sir J.J. School of Art and the Banarass Hindu University respectively. But even if the main aim of these young painters was to introduce the new creative trends according to the "Nepaliness" and Panchayat developing ideals, it is analysed how some of their art works presented polemical overtones against this system, possibly influenced by the contemptuous painting styles developed in the neighbour country at the same time[380].

Hence, this last chapter emphasizes the need to analyse the situation as a double developing path: From its external (and commercialised) side where the "Nepaliness" idea is focused, and from its political or internal side which implies the ironical aspects subtly hidden behind the superficial appearances of these patriotic works of art. A paradoxical attitude that must be analysed as the backroom of the political art developed

[377] *Contemporary Arts and Artists of Nepal. Coronation edition 1975*, edited by Takhur Prasad Mainali (Kathmandu: Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA), 1975), catalogue of an exhibition at the Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA), 1975.

[378] The Comitee was established with Chandra Man Sigh Maskey as chairman, Takhur Prasaid Mainali as vice-chairman and R.N. Joshi as secretary. In "Demand For Academy of Fine Arts," *The Rising Nepal*, February 8, 1980.

[380] Mitter, *Indian Art*, 203.

after the fall of the Panchayat regime in 1990, when the visual arts would merge with new multimedia styles "beyond the canvass", such as installation and performance art.

9.1. The bohemian behaviour of SKIB-71 artists group: A new "Nepaliness" at the exhibition grounds.

The SKIB-71 group of artists in Nepal was constituted in 1971 by Batsa Gopal Vaidya along with Shashi Shah (1940), Krishna Manandhar (1947) and Indra Pradhan (1944-1995), all of them students at the Sir J.J. School of Arts during the same period of time[381]. Historically credited for introducing a series of ground-breaking techniques that gave a new impulse to the development avant-garde art in Nepal, its members were distinguished by presenting a completely different style among each other. However, the influences and hybridisation of their creative ideas could not be avoided in certain stages of their careers developed through the next twenty years of collaborative practice.

As the main promoter of this group, Shashi Bikram Shah (1940) represented the surreal style with outstanding drawing skills that were "particularly striking and eye catching"[382]. Specialised in muralism at the Sir J.J. School of Arts, and attending a course on graphics at the Triveni Kala Sangam, in Delhi, in 1968 Shashi Shah organised his first retrospective at the NAFA´s exhibition hall, presenting a series of paintings clearly inspired in Salvador Dali[383]. Besides, Shashi Shah also participated in a group exhibition

Fig. 228: Shashi Shah "Composition," 1963. Watercolour on paper. Source: *Retrospective. Shashi Shah,* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2007), catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, March, 2007.

[381] However, it has to be said that the first attempt to gather an artists collective in Nepal was leaded by Tej Bahadur Chitrakar in Novermber 1958 who, along with other students of the Juddha Kala Pathasala, formed the Square artists group. But after a single exhibition at the Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra, this group was dissolved for unknown reasons. In Chitrakar, *Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, 105*.

[382] "Prithvi Art Gallery Opened," *The Rising Nepal*, January 11, 1969, 2-8.

[383] "Her Majesty´s 41st Birthday To Be Celebrated For A Week. Birthday Celebration Committee Publishes Programme," *The Rising Nepal,* August 18, 1968, 1.

along with the abstract painter Vijay Thapa and the prolific surrealist Manuj Babhu Mishtra (1936-2018) at the NAFA´s exhibition hall. However, apart from the fact that this show was "inaugurated by Devanand, a film star from India", no information has been found about this particular event, nor the artists seemed willing to speak about it during their personal interviews[384].

Only a few months later the SKIB-71 would be inaugurated, with Shashi Shah as its leader. Thanks to his connection with the Royal House, as a descendant of Prithvi Narayan Shah, this cluster was significantly supported by the presence of Queen Aishwarya in every one of their group art exhibitions in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Darjeeling, and strongly promoted by the Panchayat art critic Narayan Bahadur Singh in his books and articles, such as in *The History of Contemporary Nepali Painting* where he highlights the leading figure of Bangdel as the "real experimentator of modern art", while stating King Birendra´s inspiration and contribution to the art and artists of Nepal as "a great source for a promising future"[385].

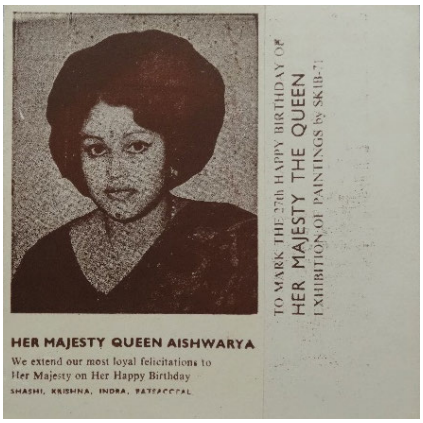

Fig. 229: SKIB-71 exhibition catalogue, 1975. Front cover. Source: *Exhibition of paintings by SKIB-71*, catalogue of an exhibition at Royal Nepal Academy, Kathmandu, November 7 through 8, 1975.

Fig. 230: Queen Aishwarya with SKIB-71, c. 1975. Source: Photo courtesy of Indra Pradhan´s family, 2015.

While working along with the members of the SKIB-71 artists group, Shashi Shah began to be inspired by the traditional Hindu mythology of Nepal. This led him to develop

[384] "Painting Exhibition Inaugurated," *The Rising Nepal*, April 4, 1971, 1.

[385] Narayan Bahadur Singh, "*The History of Contemporary Nepali Painting.* Kathmandu: Nepal Academy, 1976" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

a never-ending series of different representations of the Kalki horse, or the last avatar of Vishnu who will come and save the world for the last time before its end, and which has become the icon of this artist´s particular style. It has to be said that the original idea of painting the Kalki horse seems to have arosen from Shashi´s experimental painting "Ten Incarnations", created in 1982 with a particular style that significantly overlapped with the "neo-tantric" tendency that defined Batsa Gopal Vaidya´s work[386].

Fig. 231: Batsa Gopal Vaidya, c. 1970. Mixed media. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Thanks to his family background of Ayurvedic doctors, Batsa counted on a good knowledge of the tantric symbols and their particular meaning, thus his original "neo-tantric" paintings became successful in the modern creative scenario of those days. He was even acknowledged with the first prize at the *Seventh National Art Exhibition* celebrated in 1971, the year when the SKIB-71 group was created. However, in spite of his fresh innovative style during his youth, in later stages Batsa Gopal´s works developed into a more soft and picturesque style of semi-abstract landscapes, temples and spiritual representations of Ganesh, possibly inspired by R.N. Joshi in the Park Gallery, and the return of the picturesque outlook in a more mystical style.

Fig. 232: *Vaidya´s First One Man Show of Paintings*, 1970. Front cover. Source: *VAIDYA´S First One Man Show of Paintings,* catalogue of an exhibition at NAFA, Kathmandu, December 2 through 8, 1970.

Shashi Shah´s admiration for Batsa Gopal´s "neo-tantric" style was stated during the artist´s first solo exhibition at NAFA, 1970, in which catalogue Shashi Shah significantly acknowledged him as "the first artist in our circle to stand on ones feet on this field. His subject is perfectly Nepalese. Every painting appear with a new face. There is no artificiality in his work, and no Western influence"[387].

[386] S. B. Neupane, "A Glimpse Of SKIB-71´s Performance. Painting Exhibition," *The Rising Nepal*, November 9, 1977, 3.

[387] *VAIDYA´S First One Man Show of Paintings,* catalogue of an exhibition at NAFA, Kathmandu, December 2 through 8, 1970.

This relevant statement highlights how the "Nepaliness" idea had been of foremost importance for the members of SKIB-71 since the beginning of their careers, and always according to the Panchayat´s idea for the development of modern art. It was following this goal how Krishna Manandhar dedicated his life to his poetic representations of the Himalayan landscape and its natural elements in mystical styles of painting, especially during his collaboration with the SKIB-71 group of artists, and clearly influenced by both R.N. Joshi and Lain Singh Bangdel colourful styles.

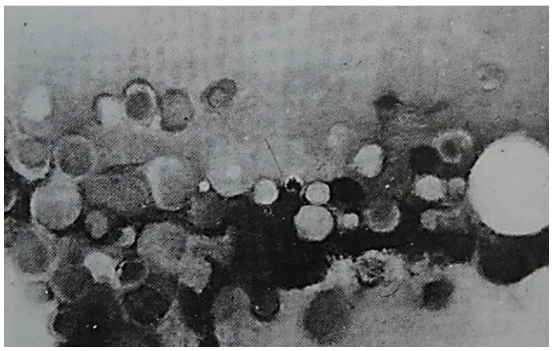

Fig. 233: Krishna Manandhar, c. 1987. Source: *A Journey through Forms and Colours. A Retrospective Painting Exhibition of Krishna Manandhar, c*atalogue of an exhibition, 1987.

Awarded with the first prize at the *Eight National Art Exhibition* with his painting "Music", it has to be said that Krishna Manandhar´s particular method of making modern art should be analysed as a consequence of his passion for the music of Rabi Shankar (1920-2012), a famous Sitar player from India. According to the artist, he was the one who inspired Krishna to exercise the application of colours in a special way, aiming to recreate the particular emotions generated by these musical rhythms through his imaginative landscapes[388].

Fig. 234: Indra Pradhan, c. 1970. Source: Photo courtesy of Indra Pradhan´s family, 2015.

At the same time Krishna´s abstract style and Batsa´s "neo-tantric" thought seemed to have inspired the work of Indra Pradhan, in which he reinterpreted the natural elements and cultures of Kathmandu Valley, such as we can see in his "Mask" series presented at the J Art Gallery in 1987[389]. However, Indra´s painting style is also characterised by an ambivalent sense of tension and violence implicit on them. A particular sensitive man, these aggressive

[388] Krishna Manandhar, personal communication with the author, February 2, 2015.
[389] "Of Masks And Chess," *The Rising Nepal*, January 6, 1990, 3.

statements were possibly his a way to reflect the artist´s preoccupation with the issue of Nepal´s cultural heritage potentially dying out. According to him, "Nepal is rich in art and culture. Nevertheless, thousands of artistic artefacts of the country have been stolen. Our country´s prizeless art has resulted in empty stone holes and blocks at temple sites. It is during such times that I am overwhelmed to create paintings of masks and deities"[390].

However, his polemic pictures seem to have been also the result of the influence of Shashi Shah´s particular drawing style at the beginning of his career. As it cannot be denied that these paintings, previous to his obsession with the Kalki horse, presented a great deal of irony implicit behind its suitable "Nepaliness". For instance in the following image, presented at a SKIB-71 art exhibition at the NAFA´s –under the RNA- exhibition hall in 1981, we find a complex representation of a Naga King with its head divided in multiple parts, similarly to the design of the Royal Throne in Nepal. From the Naga´s navel, a lotus flower emerges, but on top of its petals it presents a series of human heads with a tortured aspect[391].

Fig. 235: Shashi Bikram Shah, 1981. Source: *SKIB-71*, catalogue of an exhibition at NAFA, Kathmandu, November 7 through 16, 1981.

Besides the importance of their different, but complementary, avant-garde painting styles, the relevance of the performance as "modern artists" of Nepal has to be highlighted as one of the most important characteristics attached to the SKIB-71 artists group

[390] Rabin Man Shakya, "Creative expressions through masks," *The Rising Nepal*, February 4, 1994.
[391] Andrea de la Rubia Gómez-Moran, "Censura y abstracción como medio de expresión a través de la pintura contemporánea nepalí," *Revista Historia Autónoma* 8 (2016): 126.

bohemian behaviour and their paradoxical ways of living, focused on the celebration of picnics and parties along with other young artists, musicians, dancers and, according to Krishna Manandhar, "lots of raksi"[392]. A theatrical behaviour that could be seen as a sort of "glocalisation" of the festive environment distinctive of the avant-garde groups of Paris during the pre-war period, but also hybridised with the alternative styles popularised during the hippie times in Kathmandu, such as the one of the Beatles, whose particular ichonography was clearly adopted for the design of the SKIB-71 exhibition catalogues[393].

Consequently, the SKIB-71 artists group was idealised not only as a source of influence that made Nepalese modern artist reconsider the avant-garde styles, but also as a performance in which the identity of the "modern artist" was emphasized as the creator capable of "glocalising" the international living styles always according to the "Nepaliness" idea, and as something that could be compared to Liechty´s studies about the concept of the *Ijjat*, a social term that means "dignity, prestige or honour" and through which middle-class consumerism is controlled while being attached to the traditional schema[394].

Fig. 236: SKIB-71 exhibition catalogue, 1981. Front cover. Source: *SKIB-71*, catalogue of an exhibition at NAFA, Kathmandu, November 7 through 16, 1981.

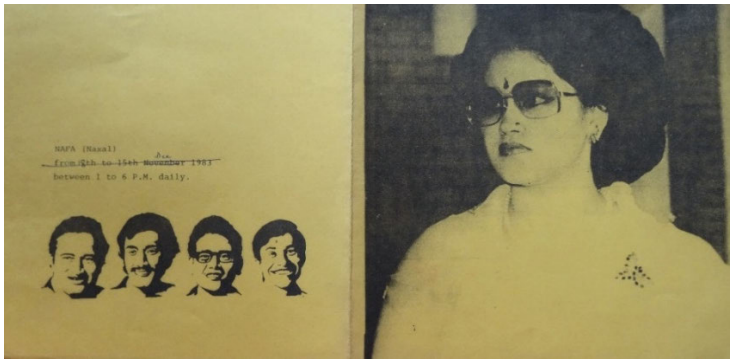

Fig. 237: SKIB-71 exhibition catalogue, 1983. Front cover. Source: *SKIB-71*, catalogue of an exhibition at NAFA, Kathmandu, December 8 through 15, 1983.

[392] Krishna Manandhar, personal communication with the author, February 2, 2015.

[393] It was due to the arrival of foreign visitors that the Nepalese youths felt unavoidably attracted by their strange behaviour and exotic tastes, such as drugs and new musical styles like Jimmy Hendrix or The Beatles. In Benjamin Linder, "Of Tourist Places: The Cultural Politics of Narrating Space in Thamel," *Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himālayan Studies*, 37, (2017).

[394]. Liechty*, Suitably Modern.*

9.2. From the political cartoon to the criticism of the self-portrait. A visual performance.

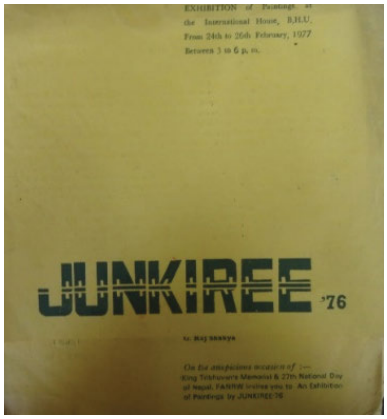

Fig. 238: *Junkiree ´76. Exhibition of Paintings*, 1977. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

Following the steps of the SKIB-71 artists group, another group of young creators inaugurated in those times was the Junkiree, which means "firefly". In the same way the SKIB-71 belonged to the Sir J.J. School of Arts in Mumbai, this group was formed in 1976 along with a group of Nepalese students of the Baranass Hindu University (BHU). Among its most relevant members for the scene of modern art in Nepal there was Kiran Manandhar, who in those times was reformulating his picturesque style of painting. But also other young promises such as Surendra Raj Battharai (1956-2007), or Birendra Prataph Singh (1956).

Already during their student period at BHU, the Junkiree artists group organised several art exhibitions at BHU with patriotic depictions of the Nepalese culture and countryside, such as in their first exhibition at the BHU International House, where they presented a series of paintings with significant titles such as "Landscape", "Festival" or "Kathmandu Valley"[395]. Among these, Surendra´s particular work, focused on the representation of the typical *jophadi* or village house of the mountain´s hills is to be highlighted as an evolution of his work during his collaborative practice with the Young Artist Group, focused on the picturesque outlook of landscape painting.

Fig. 239: Surendra Raj Bhattarai making a painting inspired on the village, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2015.

[395] *Junkiree ´76. Exhibition of Paintings*, catalogue of an exhibition at the International House, B.H.U., Banarassi, February 24 through 26, 1977.

Shortly after their return to Nepal, and after holding a few group exhibitions at the RNA´s main hall, the creative initiatives of the Junkiree artists were divided because of the inauguration of Palpasa and Sirjana Art Galleries, established by Kiran Manandhar and Birendra Prataph Singh respectively, and leading to the development of post-modern art towards two different "Nepaliness" painting styles. As while the Palpasa Art Gallery followed R.N. Joshi´s legacy while emphasizing the use of the colourful use of the picturesque style, the Sirjana Art Gallery was characterised for beign a hub for the gathering of the most controversial and ironical painters of Nepal, and where the SKIB-71 and YAG artists group constantly participated.

Fig. 240: Junkiree artists group at their exhibition in BHU, 1977. Source: Photo courtesy of Surendra Raj Batharai´s family, 2015.

Fig. 241: Srijana Art Gallery, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of Krishna Manandhar, 2017.

As the initial promoter of the Sirjana Art Gallery in 1980, Birendra Prataph Singh is today a great Nepalese artists who in those times counted with a good economic support, as he belonged to an aristocratic family of Western Nepal. According to the artist he chose the name "Sirjana" on behalf of his wife[396]. However, the theme of *sirjanā*, which means "creation" in Nepali, was already a usual topic of his abstract etching while working along with Junkiree artists group, while being inspired by his teacher at the Lalitkala Akademy in Delhi, the Indian "neo-tantric" artist Deepak Banerjee[397]. Also a skillful cartoonist, Birendra Prataph Singh was employed for his drawings at the Gorkhapatra newspaper for many years while, in later stages of his career, his polemical

[396] In Birendra Prataph Singh, personal communication with the author, February 10, 2015.
[397] Birendra Prataph Singh, personal communication with the author, February 10, 2015.

Fig. 242: Birendra Prataph Singh, "Life After Death," 1976. Etching. Source: Photo courtesy of Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2015.

drawings will divert into critical statements where the artist reported the issue of the vanishing heritage of Nepal through the representation of the main cultural sites of Kathmandu in a crumbling state[398]

Following the avant-garde living styles indicative of the performance of the "modern Artist", established by the SKIB-71 group, during its initial stages the Sirjana Art Gallery´s alternative space constituted as a theatrical stage where the young experimental poets, musicians and painters of the time gathered to play chees and consume raksi, while organising of multimedia modern art exhibitions[399]. Working in collaboration with the satirical comments written by critical writers and poets, these young artists started to divert their art works towards the production of ironical cartoon*s* that seemed to criticise the political system of that time.

Nevertheless, these polemical works never dared to criticise the Panchayat system directly, and even collaborating with its "democratic" ideas while exhibiting these works at the *National Cartoon Exhibitions*, celebrated at the RNA´s exhibition hall as part of the festivities of *gai jātra* for more than ten years[400]. However, to establish a further study about the cartoon*s* exhibited in such shows is complicated as most of these drawings seem to have disappeared after the Panchayat´s fall in 1990[401].

Fig. 243: Kul Man Singh Bandari, Poster for *gai jātra* festival, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2015.

[398] Ibid.

[399] Sharad Ranjit, personal communication with the author, May 2, 2015.

[400] "Need To Develop Art Of Satire Underlined," *The Rising Nepal*. October 13, 1977. The *gai jātra* is a satirical event of the *newār* during which the sadness for the death of family members is diminished and the freedom of expression is allowed for a day.

[401] While the majority of the interviewed artists claim to have participated in these cartoon exhibitions, none of them seemed to have any copy or example. Nevertheless, one of the few families that seem to have custodied the cartoon*s* as valuable works of art is Kul Man Singh Bhandari´s relatives.

Fig. 244: "His Majesty the King at Royal Nepal Academy Hall yesterday." Source: *The Rising Nepal*, August 11, 1976.

However, in order to understand the double-face implicit behind the prolific cartoon*s* of these Panchayat artists, the performative act of becoming modern artist of Nepal must be highlighted as a complement to these ironical art works. Regarding this, the polemical painter Manuj Babhu Mishtra should be regarded as one of the most ambibalent painters of Nepal, whose ambiguous art works seem to speak in contrast to Manuj's declared devotion to this political regime. Trained at the Government College of Arts & Crafts in Dacca, Bangladesh, and also a theatre player arts during his youth, after the fall of the Panchayat regime in 1990 this artist imposed to himself a permanent retirement at his house, the Hermitage Art Cottage, in order to express his annoyance against the new political situation in a performative way[402].

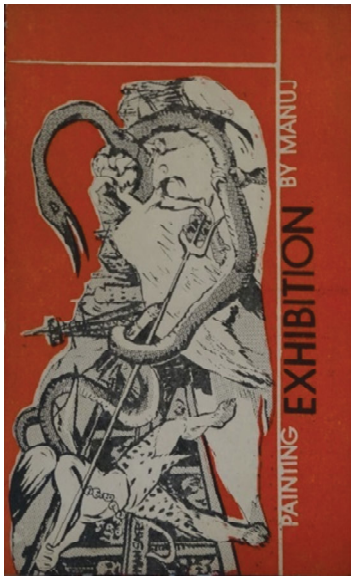

Fig. 245: *Painting exhibition by Manuj*, 1982. Front cover. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

As well as it had been the case of previously mentioned artists, Manuj Babhu Mishtra was one of those Nepalese avant-garde painters personally invited by King Mahendra to return to Nepal, with the aim of contributing to the development of the country's creative scene, after his visit to Manuj's solo show at the Shilkapala Academy, which had been commissioned by the Nepalese Embassy for King´s official tryp to

[402] Manuj Babhu Mishtra, personal communication with the author, April, 21, 2015.

Pakistan in 1967[403]. Once in Nepal, Manuj presumes to have proved his faithfulness to the Royal Family by creating a monumental portrait of King Birendra and his Queen for the coronation day[404]. However, when establishing a visual study of Manuj´s early representations, many of his works clearly contradicts the artist´s performative statements in the favour of the Panchayat regime. A clear example of his ambivalent attitude took place in his *Peace Zone Art Exhibition*, celebrated in 1982 at Saraswoti Saddan. Here, Manuj presented a series of paintings that, even if they were supposed to illustrate King Birendra´s declaration of the Kingdom of the Himalaya as a "Zone of Peace", they were characterised by a violent and aggressive style, far from reflecting the condition of "peace" idealised by the Nepalese monarch[405].

Fig. 246: Manuj Babu Mishra, "Pacific Band," 1983. Oil on canvas. Source: Mohan Kumar Upadhyaya, ed., *Atelier Hermitage. Manuj Babu Mishra. A Contemporary Painter of Nepal* (Kathmandu: Nepal Sahitya Prakashan Kendra, 2004).

Mishtra´s performative attitude seem to be further supported by his literary work, *Inner Vibration*, where the artist insisted on the importance of creating Art as a tool for the revolution, "in the same way as Picasso did with his avant-garde painting styles"[406]. With regard to this, his admiration for the international icons of Western modern art as great examples to be followed in the process of becoming modern artist of Nepal. In the

[403] This invitation happened In "Art Exhibition in Dacca," *The Rising Nepal*, April 9, 1968, 1.
[404] Manuj Babhu Mishtra, personal communication with the author, April 21, 2015.
[405] *Painting Exhibition by Manuj,* catalogue of an exhibition, Kathmandu, December 16, 1982.
[406] Manuj Babu Mishtra, *Inner Vibration*. Kathmandu: The Royal Nepal Academy, 2015" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).

later stages of his creative career, Manuj developed an extravagant obsession for the icon of Mona Lisa as, according to the artist, "he was in love with her, in the same way Picasso was in love with Doora Maar"[407].

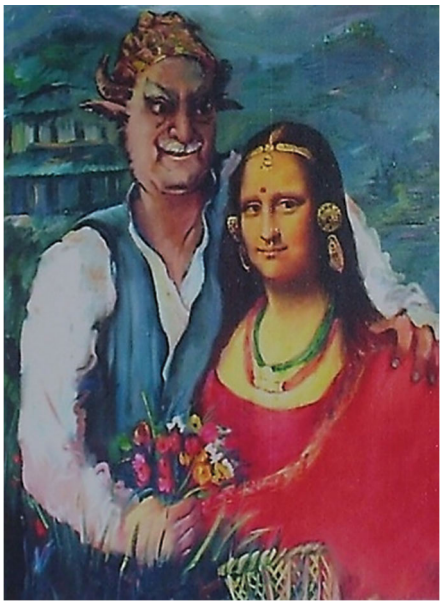

Fig. 247: Manuj Babu Mishra, "My Mona Lisa," c. 2008. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

This was the reason why Manuj started to represent different versions of the Mona Lisa as avatars of Nepalese ethnical women against Himalayan scenes, and with his own self-portrait always included in the picture in a submissive, but also certainly ironical, attitude. This seems to be not only a possible critique to the political environment of Nepal, selling the country for the pleasure of the foreign visitors who still came in the Himalayan Kingdom looking for the mythical Shangri-La, but also a sharp hint about the economic value of the contemporary art market in the world. As it was noted as early as in 1975 by Narayan Bahadur Singh in his article "Male Mona Lisa: Price is Six Hundred Lakhs" published as part of his book *Art: An Impression and Contemplation*[408].

In a similar way, the contradiction between Manuj Babhu Mishtra´s patriotic performance and the ironical sense implicit in his surreal works of art is further enhanced when analysing the artist´s tendency to make self-portraits using the cartoon´s technique, where he depicts himself with violent attitudes and horns over his head as, according to him, a metaphorical way to reflect the horrors of the world[409]. The powerful statement hidden behind these self-portraits would influence the developing styles of other polemical artist at the service of the Panchayat, such as it is the case of the late drawings of Shashi Shah, and particularly his latest tendency of making ironical portraits of himself in the most extravagant situations[410].

On the other hand, it could be said that these series of political portraits seem to have been be the antechamber of the performance art tendecies, developed since the

[407] Manuj Babhu Mishtra, personal communication with the author, April, 21, 2015.
[408] Narayan Bahadur Singh, "*Art: An Impression and Contemplation.* Kathmandu: Sajha Publications, 2015" (Trans. Tara Lal Shrestha. Unpublished manuscript, 2015).
[409] Manuj Babhu Mishtra, personal communication with the author, April, 21, 2015.
[410] Sashi Bikram Shah, personal communication with the author, January 23, 2015.

1990s, when the Panchayat system was finally put to an end and the freedom of expression finally released. It should be stated that the onset of performance arts in Nepal is very much connected with the establishment of the political practice of street theatre in 1982, when the Sarwanam group staged their piece "We are looking for the spring", in which they presented a metaphoric message that would claim for the end of the Panchayat regime[411].

Fig. 248: Shashi Shah, 2015. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Despite the fact that this work has highlighted the relevance of understanding the performance of becoming modern Artist of Nepal, the first oficial performance with political hints would not take place until 1996. This was an original piece created by Subina Shrestha (1977) in Basantapur Durbar square where she made a political statement with her own body, accompanied with a photographic collage of the injured people during the second Jana Andolan and numerous Nepalese flags[412].

But in spite of Subina Shrestha´s initiative aims, it has to be said that her pioneer performance did not seem to have had much impact in the creative scene of Nepal during those years. In a similar way, the first isolated attempt to make a multimedia installation in Nepal took place as early as in the Fifth National Art Exhibition in 1970, where an unknown artist presented an "ultra-modern" picture of two figures originally framed with a wire and twinkling lights around the canvass. Entitled "In the light of the past, being the friend of the present, to be the lighthouse of the future", this isolated work must be historically highlighted, in spite of the little success that it seemed to have had among the NAFA members at that time[413].

Fig. 249: Subina Shrestha making her first performance in 1996. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

411 Mohan Himanshu Thapa, "Sarwanam. Testimonials." Accessed January 3, 2016. http://www.sarwanam.org.np/testimonials

412 Nowadays, Subina has given up the practice of performance arts for the profession of journalist. In Subina Shrestha, personal communication with the author, March 6, 2015.

413 "The 5th National Art Exhibition. An Observation," *The Rising Nepal, January 16, 1970.*

Thus, as a result of the desire to esperiment "beyond the canvass", both these artworks are to be considered as pioneer steps in the experimentation with the modern idea of the performance and installation art in a political way, opening the field of a whole new set of creative resources developed in the post-modern times. But, on the other hand, we must take into account that these elements must be also appreciated as something already intrinsic in the traditional festivities of the *newār*, where the building of enormous chariots, as installations, and performative practices of dances and dramas, are always fundamental factors during the celebration of these religious activities.

9.3. Interactive arts and the triumph of the "Nepalipann". Is traditional art still "traditional" in post-modern Nepal?

Fig. 250: Birendra Prataph Singh, 2007. Source: *Nature´s Call. An Art Exhibition of the Natural World through Artist´s Eyes*, (Kathmandu: Nepal Art Council), catalogue of an exhibition at the Nepal Art Council, Kathmandu, July 5, 2007.

In 1990 the post-modern scene of Nepal suffered a sudden transformation in several ways. On the one hand the increasing preoccupation of the loss of the cultural and natural heritage of the Himalaya, due to the issue of environmental pollution, encouraged the production of installations and performances that were in direct interaction with Mother Nature. And, on the other, the question of the multicultural reality of the Kingdom of the Himalaya started to be a fundamental debate among the contemporary art circles of Kathmandu and the upliftment of the "Nepalipann" idea in post-modern art, particularly

inspired in the folk arts of the rural area.

One of the first multi-media installations done after the Panchayat´s fall was "The Myth of the Naga and the Kathmandu Valley Watershed", conceived by Jyoti Duwadi (c.1970) in 1993 with the aim of raising local consciousness about the country´s environmental decadence, and urge to preserve the Nepalese cultural heritage[414]. However, the first step in the idea of interacting art with nature has to be credited to the picturesque painter R.N. Joshi, during his late collaboration at the Shudo University of Hiroshima in 1987, where he pictured a mandala directly on the surface of a rock[415].

Fig. 251: Jyoti Duwadi, "The Myth of the Naga and the Kathmandu Valley Watershed," 1993. Multimedia installation. Source: Artwork of Jyoti Duwadi @ Akash-Himal, accessed January 6, 2015, http://www.akash-himal.com/

During those times many collaborators of the Sirjana Art Gallery started a turn back to the picturesque styles of painting, particularly through the establishment of a "Hobby Painting Class" while following the tradition of easel painting initiated by the Park Gallery in the 1970s, and setting the basis of the educative system followed by the Sirjana College of Fine Arts since its founding in 2001, until the day of today[416]. Thus, following R.N. Joshi´s legacy, in 1995 the Sirjana Art Gallery organised the *Nepal-Bangladesh Art Camp*, for the auspicious occasion of "His Majesty the King´s Golden Jubilee Birth Anniversary". This consisted of a series of performative installations set at Lumle in Pokhara, and the Sundarijal forest in Kathmandu, where a total of eighteen artists from Kathmandu and Bangladesh did a series of drawings and painting compositions in direct interaction with the natural elements available in the surroundings[417].

[414] "Artwork of Jyoti Duwadi @ Akash-Himal." Accessed January 6, 2015, http://www.akash-himal.com/

[415] Project R N Joshi. "Mandala painting work in Japan." Accessed February 4, 2018. http://www.rnjc.com.np/#

[416] In Bhaikhuta Shreshta,"Srijana College of Fine Arts," *Creation*, September 25, 2011, 101-102.

[417] Malla, "*The Spheres of Postmodern Arts.*"

Fig. 252: Images of Nepal-Bangladesh Art Camp, 1995. Source: *Nepal-Bangladesh Art Camp*, (Kathmandu: Sirjana Art Gallery, 1995), catalogue of an exhibition at Sundarijal forest, Kathmandu, December, 1995.

Among the particular characteristics of these early experimentations "beyond the canvass", their colourful aspect must be highlighted as a significant factor implicit in them. While on the one hand this may be due to the influence of the tradition of *paubhā* painting and its brilliant tones, on the other the fact that these creators belonged to a performative culture, where the tantric divinities are worshipped with red and yellowish powders, has also to be taken into account as a comparative aspect to these interactive practices of "worshipping the nature", pursued in contemporary times.

These colourful aspects would soon become one of the main characteristics of the avant-garde creations of Kiran Manandhar, whose work consisted of a series of hybrid works of art between the picturesque style and the aesthetics of the popular "neo-tantric" symbols or cultural imageries of the people of Kathmandu. Consequently event if the developing path of post-modern art in Nepal was initially established as a tool to reflect the political thoughts in ironical ways, mainly through the activities developed at the Sirjana Art Gallery in its initial stages, soon these tendencies would be constricted by a new wave of the picturesque outlook that has framed the development of contemporary art in Nepal up to the present day, and being particularly supported by the Nepalese politicians by appointing Kiran Manadhar as

Fig. 253: Kiran Manandhar, "Mandala," 1990. Acrylic on canvas. Source: Photo courtesy of Sagar Manandhar, 2015.

Chancellor of the new Nepal Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) in 2012[418].

One of the most relevant artists in following Kiran´s steps was Prashanta Shrestha (1968-1999) whose colourful abstractions were displayed at the Palpasa Art Gallery in 1990[419]. Four years later Prashanta would found the Kathsamandap artists group along with other Nepalese painters, whose works were characterised by the combination of these colourful styles and a suitable "Nepaliness" implicit in their themes, as it is the case of Asha Dangol (1973) whose contemporary works consists of pop versions of the tantric imageries against the polluted background of the Nepalese capital.

On the other hand, the enhancement of political art and the promotion of performance, video and installation techniques would be restricted to the private art galleries that have emerged in Kathmandu in recent times. This is the case of MCube Art Gallery established in 2011 by the experimental artist Manish Lal Shrestha (1977), or also the feminist performer Ashmina Ranjit (1966) and the NEXUS creative space since 2016. Initially following the legacy established by the *Nepal-Bangladesh Art Camp* of 1995, in 2002 Ashmina Ranjit joined with Manish Lal Shreshta and other emergent creators, such as Sujan Chitrakar (1974), in order to inaugurate SUTRA, a group of artists whose works would be committed to develop the performance and interactive art connected with the natural scene[420]. This was the case of the *Monsoon Harmony* workshop, or the *Coaxing the Nature* creative event, the latter organised in collaboration with KHOJ, a creative group from Bangladesh, in order to build series of ephemeral installations and performances at the premises of Osho Tapoban´s forest[421].

Fig. 254: Asha Dangol, "World for New Beginning," 2015. Acrylic on canvass. Source: Asha Erina, accessed October 5, 2017, http://asha-erina.com/asha-dongol

[418] So as to differentiate itself from the old Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA), since its reconstruction 2010 this centre has changed its name for the one of Nepal Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA). In Nepal Academy of Fine Arts. "History of NAFA." Accessed April 28, 2017, http://nafanepal.org/history-of-nafa/

[419] "A Fusion of Colors," *Sunday Despatch*, September 23, 1990.

[420] Gopal Das Shrestha (Kalapremi), personal communication with the author, January 29, 2015.

[421] Malla, "*Some References of Modern Contemporary Nepali Art*."

Parallel to these installations and performative practices, the post-modern art of Nepal suffered a process of "traditionalisation" more focused on the "Nepalipann" idea, which came along with a significant influx of foreign aid and the increasing establishment of NGOs in Kathmandu Valley. As a consequence of the development of the rural areas in the mountain, the folk arts were commercialised as local means of income while suffering a process of change and adaptation to be exported to other lands. One of the most significant cases are the knowadays famous Mithila paintings from the ancient Kingdom of Videha, located on the frontier between India and Nepal. These paintings, originally characterised for being abstract and ephemeral representations depicted on the walls of the houses during marriages or festival times, were popularised all around the world after the establishment of the Janakpur Women´s Development Centre (JWDC) in 1989, with the aim of helping the empoverished women of the area[422].

Fig. 255: Uma Shankar Shah, "Ramayana," 2013. Etching. Source: *Uma & Seema. Expressions of Devotion,* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2013), catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2013, 8.

It was thanks to the JWDC initiatives, the Maithili women started to transfer their religious paintings from the walls of their houses to paper, resulting in an exhibition of their works in May 1990 at the American Library of Kathmandu[423]. As a result, a significant number of post-modern artists from Kathmandu started to be valued for the "traditionisation" of their new paintings inspired in the Mithila style. A good example is the one of Uma Shankar Shah (1965), whose etchings are excellent representations of the folk culture of his own village in the Janakpur area, displaying classical silhouettes of

[422] Andrea de la Rubia Gómez-Moran, "La turista feminista y el arte Mithila en India y Nepal. Consumismo por el desarrollo de la mujer moderna," *Anales de Historia del Arte* 24 (2014): 221-237.
[423] "US Envoy Opens Maithili Art Show," *The Rising Nepal,* May 19, 1990, 3.

Mithila art into beautiful reinterpretations of the Ramayana, while comparing this ancient tale with the political turmoil of his country during the post-Panchayat times[424].

Equally relevant, in this sense, are the works of the performer Saurganga Darshandari (1980), whose etchings depict Mithila-style ornamentations and divine iconographies of Mother Nature, not only as a way of representing the women and their fertile empowerment, but also as a symbol of their suppression between the Nepalese tradition and the contemporary times, through the use of a veil that conceals the woman´s face[425]. In addition, Ragini Upadayay Grela (c.1965), highlighted for feminist paintings which are focused on the depiction of mythological Goddesses on behalf of the women of her country, with certain "primitivism" in the way Ragini imprints her own hands in many of her paintings in a performative way, and her inspirtation in Mother Nature which shows her concerning with the environment[426].

Fig. 256: Saurganga Darshandari, "Half-invisible," 2010. Source: Nepal Now Blog, Saurganga Darshandari, accessed January 20, 2018, http://www.nepalnow.blog/project/saurganga-darshandari/

Fig. 257: Ragini Upadayay Grela, 2001. Source: *Ragini´s Odyssey,* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2001), Catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, January 1, 2001.

[424] *Uma & Seema. Expressions of Devotion,* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2013), catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2013.

[425] Saurganga Darshandari, personal communication with the author, January 1, 2015.

[426] Holding her first art exhibition in NAFA in 1978, today Ragini is the Chancellor of the institution and fights to build a better place for the whole scene of modern art in Nepal. In Ragini Upadayay Grela, personal communication with the author, February 23, 2015.

On the other hand, it has to be said that in a similar way to the processes of commercialisation and change implicit in the folk arts of Nepal, in current times many *paubhā* painters in Kathmandu started to abandon the picturesque styles implemented in their representations since the middle of the 20th century, for a symbolical return to the traditional styles. Indeed, even if these movements have been widely renowned as convenient forms of preserving the richness of a unique culture, on the verge of extinction, it cannot be denied that there is always a commercial interest implicated in these localised acts of creativity, thus these supposedly "ancient works" also need to be framed in the category of post-modern art. For example, as well as many other *paubhā* artist of that time, Lok Chitrakar (1961) was employed by a British company that commissioned the production of ancient-style Nepalese art works in order to sell them abroad. However, in later stages his paintings could not avoid to experiment significant changes according to the current times: "I have sometimes nostalgia for the past, but I don't mean to go back with my art. Now the system has changed, things go very fast at this is why now this type of art is difficult"[427].

Fig. 258: Lok Chitrakar, "Natural slider," c. 2015. Acrylic on paper. Source: Simrik Atelier, accessed June 2, 2016, http://simrikatelier.com/gallery/

Hence, starting with the picturesque outlook and its particular idea of Nepal introduced by the foreign visitors in the Himalaya during the 19th century, it is noticed how this was gradually appropriated by the elites of Nepal as a means for self-representation with particular emphasis in the "Nepaliness" idea, in order to recreate these picturesque scenes as non-Western, but Nepali. The suitable parameters of the

[427] Lok Chitrakar, personal communication with the author, January 15, 2015.

"Nepaliness" were established among in the realisitic representation of the cultural heritage of Kathmandu and the rural scenario, and the development of abstract paintings that depicted the mountain scene covered in fogs and mysts. Followingly, from the 1970s onwards new foreign ideas are introduced in the Valley of the Gods, especially through the increasing fascination for Tantrism and the traditional arts developed within Kathmandu´s cultural area, which led to the upsurge of the "neo-traditional" ideas adopted as a new and original way to represent the "Nepaliness" in modern art, and which lead to the current development of performance and installation art as a way to interact with Mother Nature.

According to this it could be stated that, as well as it was the case during the Rana period, the development of modern art during the Panchayat period of time has been the result of a round trip process of influences and the "Occidentalisation", through which the Nepalese artists have been picturing their nation according to the global parameters of what "Nepal" should be, contributing to develop the idyllic Himalaya for its international consumerism until today. Therefore, even if the categories of the modern artists and the traditional artisan are clearly separated according to the social stratification in high and low castes, there is barely any difference between their painting styles for "picturing the nation". But demarked while producing these art works either for the Nepalese elite in the case of the modern artist, or for the foreign visitors in the Country in the case of the traditional artisan.

Fig. 259: A shop in Thamel, 2017. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

Conclusion

Picturing a nation, performing an identity

> "It is often said that the impact of European colonial rulers imposed a standard for amalgamating the diverse cultural traditions into a model for the purpose of ruling and imposing its own forms of culture, resulting in the blur of all cultures and identities. However, "westernisation" of Nepalese art did not mean the loss or complete rejection of its tradition, but all the way around it meant a departure from such ancient forms." Abhi Subedi, 1995[428].

After more than a century of creative development, the question of modern art and creative change in the contemporary background of Nepal is still a current debate that has not been properly clarified yet. In relation to the polemical issue of the progressive "westernisation" of Nepalese art and consequent loss of the local identity in modern art, the conceptual artist Sujan Chitrakar (1974) proposes a return of the "traditionisation" through the implementation of the ancient aesthetics into new creative reformulations[429].

In this regard, the art critic Geeta Kapoor recalls "modernisation" as a social and economic process mostly applied to the "undeveloped societies" that are at the same time excluded from being modern. However, the real development in Third World countries emerges as a consequence of the consciousness of belonging to a nation and its culture, as "tradition is what is invented in the course of a struggle"[430]. It is following this idea how Kapur states that modernity is established as "a way of relating the material and cultural worlds in a period of unprecedented change" while provoking "a cultural dynamic whereby questions of autonomy, identity and authenticity come to the fore"[431]. In a similar way, the first conclusion of this work states that:

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[428] Abhi Subedi, "Nepali Art: Nepali Utopia," *contributions to Nepalese Studies* 22 (1995): 123.
[429] Sujan Chitrakar, personal communication with the author, March 4, 2015.
[430] Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism. Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000), 268-276.
[431] Ibid, 298.

- Modern art in Nepal is mainly a tool to define the *self* as "different and unique", using visual creativity for the picturing of the Nepalese nation-state, and the performance of its unified cultural identity in order to project it towards the international world. Therefore the ideas of nation and tradition are understood as concepts that have been raised as a consequence of globalisation in the present world, pointing out to the sense of belonging to a certain tribe or cultural community, and "whose connectedness is paradoxically given through the abstracting mediations of mass communications and the consumer market"[432].

It was due this tribal consciousness of the *self* how the fear of losing the cultural identity, due to the impact of "westernisation", started to be raised among the local population. Thus the "Nepaliness" idea started to be adopted as a means that allowed the local artists to experiment with the new trends, at the same time as emphasizing the nostalgia for the country´s cultural imagery. However, we have to take into account that the idea of Nepal as a nation is a utopia generated as a consequence of the need of defining the Kingdom of the Himalaya towards the international world, as well as the fact that its traditional culture is something that was firstly invented by the foreign researchers in Kathmandu and later appropriated by the Nepalese, the second conclusion states that:

- The "Nepaliness" in modern art has to be understood as a result of the round trip myth, in which while the foreigners exoticise Nepal the Nepalese exoticise the foreigners. Also, the local appropriation of the idea of Nepal as the Kingdom of the Himalaya with the aim of promoting the country´s cultural aspects, using its iconographies as a tourist souvenir, as well as a strategy to unify Nepal´s multicultural reality as a single identity at the service of the King and the Panchayat system.

It is according to this how the idea of culture is also comprehended as an illusion, essentially territorial of a particular group, thus the main pillar over which the different communities of the global world are built and developed, according to the same political

[432] Paul James, introduction to *Nation Formation. Towards a Theory of Abstract Community* (London: Sage Publications, 1996).

and economic interests that have built the frontiers among the nations of the modern world. In other words, to deny the reality of someone´s cultural parameters supposes to deny the frontiers that reassure the common sense of belonging to a certain place and a certain tribe.

Nevertheless, Geertz points out that "our culture" is in reality a changeable entity that suffers a permanent process of hybridisation with "other" cultures[433]. Thus, it is stated that nowadays the worldwide cultures cannot be seen as homogenous entities, but as juxtapositions in which there is not centre nor periphery, working along with in a round trip way of influences on the global scale, in a social process of continuous "trans-local" exchange.

Due to this, the establishment of the Nepalese cultural identity must be analysed as the result of a mimicry, described by Bhabha as the articulation of a defensive strategy of "camouflage" against the colonial rule, through which the local *self* assumes the cultural role that the foreigner has chosen for him as his national identity. Hence, it is due to the idea of traditional culture how the existence of modern art in the "undeveloped societies" is allowed only through the questions of the hybrid and the space "in-between", understood as that place among the frontiers where new signs of identity are established[434].

However, when understanding that the culture is something permanently hybrid in its essence, the space "in-between" could be really adapted to any part of the world. In this sense, it is paradoxical that while it was the West who established and defined the cultures of the "others" during the Imperial times, nowadays it is also the West who reinforces these cultures to remain within the "Nepaliness" established frame, required to mark a country as different thus attracting for international consumerism. Consequently:

- The development of modern art in Nepal consists in a constant and dual fight, divided between their desire of experimenting with the global trends and the need of "glocalising" them, in a constant attempt to rescue the context of the past, in order to be accepted as "authentic Nepalese".

[433] Geertz Clifford, *La interpretación de las culturas*. Trans. Alberto L. Bixio (Mexico: Gedisa, 1987), 27.
[434] Hommy. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

With regard to the relevance of analysing the performance of becoming modern artist of Nepal, as part of the process of creation in general terms, this figure is highlighted as the one capable of representing the nation-state according to the "Nepaliness" idea, and at the service of the Panchayat system. In order to understand this, it is interesting to highlight how in contemporary Hinduism and Buddhism the worship to the anthropomorphic figure of a God seems to have been substituted by worship of the main *guru* of a certain sect. Thus in many home-made altars of nowadays, the picture of the main leader of a religious congregation, respected as a divine reincarnation, is found in place of the characteristically sculpture or painting of a traditional divinity[435]. Therefore:

- The modern art of Nepal is to be also understood not only with a mere aesthetical purpose, but also as a performative act in which the process of creation becomes a theatrical act, in which the idea of Nepal as a nation-state, the modern artist as the national creator, and the elitist performance generated around the *National Art Exhibitions*, must be taken into account as inseparable parts of the work of art.

However, there are a number of ambivalences to be highlighted in the process of making modern art, as while it was idealised as a tool to emphasize the country´s traditional heritage in the international world, this panorama was suffering an unavoidable process of decadence as a consequence of the changes brought about in modern times. Following the idea of Kapur about modern art as a masquerade, a copy of what is non-existent in a theatrical environment, where "simulation is very likely to become simulacrum", the last conclusion underlines that[436]:

- Modern art in Nepal must be understood as a tool for the promotion of the Panchayat Government´s ideas, but also a visual metaphor for the establishment of subtle complaints against its political "democracy". As when analysing the art works developed during the Panchayat times, we find numerous hints of irony hidden behind it´s suitably "Nepaliness".

[435] Toffin, *From Monarchy to Republic,* 131.
[436] Kapur, *When Was Modernism*, 328.

However, this conclusion is nothing more than an unconfirmed hypothesis by any of the Panchayat artists mentioned in the present work. This is also meaningful when comprehending Nepal as an open-closed society, as a way to unveil its inner face hidden behind the mountain´s smile, and an interesting field still to be worked in future researches that analyse the complexities of the creative development of modern Nepal in a deeper way.

Finally, when comparing the idea of modern art in Nepal with the creative practices developed in contemporary times, it is stated that the latter are still divided between the political use according to the freedom of expression and new idealisms, and the suitable "Nepaliness" claimed by the international world as well as preferred by the Panchayat system as the best way to protect its political regime in the country. Hence, when taking into account that the idea of Nepal is utopic by definition, the concepts of "Nepaliness", "Nepalipann", or the "Nepalese tradition" are understood as visual tools that collaborate with the national discourse and its commercial exotic imagery. But, as well as during the Panchayat period there were certain figures that raised their political voice through subtle ironical statements, the utopia of Nepal is today deconstructed by a series of young performers who search for their identity far from the "Nepaliness" idea. Therefore, it could be finally said that the true contemporary art of Nepal lays on these performative bodies as the principal transmitters of a transformed culture in an inevitable process of change. As, until which point the sense of "belonging" to a certain country, culture and place, is real in the present time?

Conclusiones

Esbozando una nación, evocando una identidad

> "A menudo se dice que el impacto de las colonias europeas impuso un estándar para amalgamar las diversas tradiciones culturales en un modelo, con el propósito de gobernar e imponer sus propias formas de cultura, lo que resulta en la confusión de todas las culturas e identidades. Sin embargo, la "occidentalización" del arte nepalí no significaba la pérdida o el rechazo total de su tradición, sino una desviación a partir de estas formas antiguas." Abhi Subedi, 1995[437].

Tras más de un siglo de desarrollo creativo, la cuestión del arte contemporáneo en Nepal es un debate recurrente que aún no ha sido debidamente aclarado en el ámbito actual del país. Con respecto a la polémica de la progresiva "occidentalización" del arte nepalí y la consecuente pérdida de su identidad local, el artista conceptual Sujan Chitrakar (1974) propone un retorno a la "tradicionalización" a través de la implementación de la estética antigua en nuevas formulaciones de la creatividad actual[438].

Sin embargo, la crítica de arte Geeta Kapoor indica que la "modernización" no es más que un proceso económico y social mayormente aplicado a las "sociedades subdesarrolladas", las cuales son al mismo tiempo excluidas de dicha modernidad. El verdadero desarrollo llevado a cabo en los países del Tercer Mundo surge a consecuencia de la consciencia de pertenecer a una nación y su cultura, ya que "la tradición es aquello que se inventa en el transcurso de una revolución"[439]. Es siguiendo esta idea como Kapur concluye que la modernidad se establece como "un modo de relacionar los mundos materiales y culturales en un periodo de cambio inminente", provocando "una dinámica cultural donde las cuestiones de autonomía, identidad y autenticidad son destacadas"[440].

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[437] Abhi Subedi, "Nepali Art: Nepali Utopia," *contributions to Nepalese Studies* 22 (1995): 123.
[438] Sujan Chitrakar, personal communication with the author, March 4, 2015.
[439] Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism. Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000), 268-276.
[440] Ibid., 298.

Es siguiendo esta hipótesis como la primera conclusión de la presente investigación establece que:

- El arte moderno en Nepal ha de ser comprendido principalmente como una herramienta para la definición del *yo* como diferente y único, utilizando la creatividad visual para esbozar la idea del estado-nación nepalí y evocar su identidad cultural unificada a fin de proyectarla hacia el mundo internacional. Por tanto, las ideas de nación y tradición son comprendidas como conceptos generados a consecuencia de la globalización, e indicadores de pertenencia a cierta tribu o comunidad cultural, "cuya conectividad se da paradójicamente a través de los medios abstractos de comunicación de masas y el mercado de consumo"[441].

Fue debido al surgimiento de esta consciencia tribal del *yo* cómo el miedo a perder la identidad cultural, por el impacto de la "occidentalización" comenzó a surgir entre la población local. Por ello la idea de "nepalidad" comenzó a ser adoptada como un medio ideal que permitía a los artistas contemporáneos experimentar con las nuevas tendencias, mientras que enfatizaban el sentimiento de nostalgia por el imaginario cultural del país. Sin embargo, teniendo en cuenta que la idea de la nación de Nepal es una utopía generada a consecuencia de la necesidad de definir el Reino del Himalaya de cara al mundo internacional, así como el hecho de que su cultura tradicional es algo que fue inicialmente inventado por los investigadores extranjeros en Katmandú y posteriormente apropiado por los nepalís, la segunda conclusión establece que:

- La "nepalidad" en el arte contemporáneo debe de ser entendida como resultado del mito de ida y vuelta, en el cual mientras el extranjero mitifica Nepal, el nepalí mitifica al extranjero. Asimismo, la apropiación local de la idea de Nepal como el Reino del Himalaya se configura con el fin promover los aspectos culturales del país, utilizando sus iconografías como un *souvenir* turístico, así como para la unificación de su realidad multicultural como una única identidad al servicio del Rey y el sistema Panchayat.

[441] Paul James, introduction to *Nation Formation. Towards a Theory of Abstract Community* (London: Sage Publications, 1996).

Es de acuerdo con esto cómo la idea de cultura se establece también como una ilusión esencialmente territorial y adjunta a un grupo tribal en particular, generada como el principal pilar sobre el que se construyen y desarrollan las diferentes comunidades del mundo, y de acuerdo a los mismos intereses políticos y económicos que han construido las fronteras entre las naciones en la modernidad. En otras palabras, negar la realidad de los parámetros culturales de alguien a día de hoy, supone negar las fronteras que aseguran el sentido común de pertenencia a un lugar y tribu determinada.

Sin embargo, Geertz señala que nuestra cultura es en realidad una entidad cambiante que sufre un permanente proceso de hibridación con "otras" culturas[442]. Es decir, hoy día las culturas globales no pueden ser entendidas como identidades homogéneas, sino yuxtaposiciones donde no hay ni centro ni periferia, siendo continuamente moldeadas en torno a un proceso de influencias de ida y vuelta a escala global, en un proceso social y "translocal" de intercambio continuado.

Por tanto, el establecimiento de la identidad cultural nepalí debe de ser analizado como el resultado de la mímica, descrita por Bhabha como la articulación de una estrategia defensiva de "camuflaje" contra la dominación colonial, a través de la cual el *yo* local asume el rol cultural que el extranjero ha elegido para él como su identidad nacional. Ya que es debido a la idea de "cultura tradicional" como la existencia del arte contemporáneo en estas "sociedades subdesarrolladas" se permite únicamente a través de las cuestiones de lo híbrido y el espacio "*in-between*", entendido como aquel lugar entre las fronteras donde se establecen nuevos signos de identidad[443].

Sin embargo, al entender la cultura como algo permanentemente híbrido en su esencia, el espacio "*in-between*" podría adaptarse realmente a cualquier parte del mundo. En ese sentido, resulta paradójico que mientras Occidente fue quien estableció y definió las culturas de los "otros" durante la época imperial, en el momento actual es también Occidente quien fuerza a estas culturas a permanecer dentro de los márgenes de la "nepalidad", establecidos para demarcar el país como "diferente" y por tanto atrayente para el consumismo internacional. A consecuencia de esto:

[442] Geertz Clifford, *La interpretación de las culturas*. Trans. Alberto L. Bixio (Mexico: Gedisa, 1987), 27.
[443] Hommy. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

- El desarrollo del arte de Nepal se convierte en una lucha constante y dual, dividida entre el deseo local de experimentar con las tendencias globales y la necesidad de "glocalizarlas", en un intento constante de rescatar el contexto del pasado, a fin de ser aceptadas como "auténticas de Nepal".

Con respecto a la importancia de analizar la *performance* del ser artista contemporáneo nepalí como parte del proceso creativo en general, esta figura se destaca como aquel capaz de representar el estado-nación de acuerdo con la idea de "nepalidad" y al servicio del sistema Panchayat. Para comprender esto, es interesante subrayar como en el momento actual las religiones del Hinduismo y Budismo parecen estar sustituyendo la adoración tradicional a la figura antropomórfica de una divinidad por la del *guru* de la secta. Es por ello que, a día de hoy, en muchos altares caseros es frecuente encontrar la fotografía del líder principal de una congregación religiosa en lugar de la característica escultura o pintura de una divinidad tradicional[444]. Por tanto:

- El arte contemporáneo de Nepal debe de ser comprendido no sólo con un propósito meramente estético, sino también como un acto *performativo* en el que el proceso creativo se convierte en un acto teatral. Es aquí donde la idea de Nepal como un estado-nación, el artista contemporáneo como creador nacional, y la *performance* elitista generada en torno a las *National Art Exhibitions*, deben de ser tenidas en cuenta como partes inseparables de la obra de arte final.

Sin embargo, existen un cierto número de ambivalencias que deben der ser destacadas en el proceso de hacer arte contemporáneo, ya que mientras que éste era idealizado como una herramienta para enfatizar el patrimonio tradicional del país en el mundo internacional, este panorama sufría un proceso ineludible de decadencia a consecuencia de los cambios traídos con la modernidad. Siguiendo la idea de Kapur sobre el arte contemporáneo como una mascarada, una copia de lo que no existe en un ambiente teatral, donde "es muy probable que la simulación se convierta en simulacro", la última conclusión subraya que[445]:

[444] Toffin, *From Monarchy to Republic,* 131.
[445] Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism. Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2000), 328.

- El arte contemporáneo de Nepal ha de ser comprendido como una herramienta para la promoción de los ideales del Gobierno Panchayat, pero también como una metáfora visual para el planteamiento de sutiles quejas en contra de su política "democrática". Ya que al analizar las obras de arte desarrolladas durante este periodo, encontramos numerosos tintes de ironía escondidos tras su adecuada "nepalidad".

Sin embargo esta conclusión no es más que una hipótesis sin confirmar por ninguno de los artistas Panchayat mencionados en este trabajo, lo cual es también indicativo al comprender Nepal como una sociedad abierta y cerrada, y como una forma de desvelar la cara interna del mismo tras la sonrisa de la montaña. Siendo éste un campo pendiente de trabajar en futuras investigaciones que analicen más profundamente la complejidad del ámbito creativo en la modernidad de Nepal.

Finalmente, al comparar el proceso de desarrollo del arte contemporáneo con las prácticas creativas a día de hoy, se concluye que éstas se encuentran aún divididas entre el uso político de las mismas para la libertad de expresión, y la adecuada "nepalidad" reclamada por el consumismo global, así como favorecida por el sistema Panchayat como la mejor forma de mantener el régimen en el país. Por tanto, partiendo de la base de que la idea de Nepal es una utopía en sí misma, los conceptos de "nepalidad", "*Nepalipann*", o la "tradición nepalí", son comprendidos como herramientas visuales colaborativas con el discurso nacional y su exótica imagen comercial. Pero al igual que en los tiempos Panchayat existieron ciertas figuras que alzaban su voz política a través de la sutil práctica de la ironía, la utopía de Nepal es hoy deconstruida por una serie de jóvenes *performers* que buscan su identidad lejos de la "nepalidad". Por tanto, esta conclusión finaliza destacando que el verdadero arte actual de Nepal se encuentra precisamente en esos cuerpos *performativos* como principales transmisores de una cultura en transformación e inevitable proceso de cambio. Ya que, ¿hasta qué punto es real el sentido de "pertenencia" a un país, a una cultura, y a un lugar, en el momento actual?

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Glossary

A.

Aśoka, sk.: The third Maurya Emperor in North India (304-232 BC).

auṃ, sk.: The most important mantra and spiritual icon in Hindu and Buddhist religions.

Avalokiteśvara, sk.: Bodhisattva who embodies the compassion of Buddha.

B.

bhāva, sk.: Meaning "state of the mind", it helps to create the effect of rasa in Indian art.

baha, nw.: Buddhist Vajrayana vihara or monastery.

bahi, nw.: Buddhist Mahayana vihara or monastery.

bindu, sk.: Centre of the mandala, original point from which the rest of the world is born.

Boudhanath, np.: Name of the biggest *stūpa* of Kathmandu.

C.

caitya, sk.: Buddhist cenotaph in the form of a small *stūpa*.

Cāmuṇḍā, sk.: An epithet of the Goddess Durga.

Changu Nārāyana, sk.: Hindu pagoda-style temple, dated around the Licchavi period and located on a hilltop in the Kathmandu Valley, near Bhaktapur.

chettri, np.: Caste of warriors, identical with the Kshatriya.

citrakār, sk.: Caste of painters, part of the *newār* artists of Kathmandu.

citrasūtra, sk.: Ancient and mythological text about art and painting.

G.

Gandhāra, sk.: Ancient Indo-Aryan kingdom in Afghanistan where the *Gandhāra* style of Buddhist art developed from Greek and local artistic influences.

Gorkhārajya, np.: Name of Greater Gorkha after King Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered and unified the Himalayan territory in 1768.

Gorakhnāth, np.: Name of a Nepalese saint, and one of the founder of the Nath Hindu monastic movement in India. Disciple of *Macchendrānāth*.

gopālarājavaṃśāvalī, np.: The most ancient *vaṃśāvalī*.

gopāla, np.: Believed to be the first inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley during the Hindus Valley times In India.

guṭhi, nw.: Social organisation that is used to maintain the socio-economic

order of the *newār* society since at least the 15th century.

H.

Harmikā, sk.: Top part of a *stūpa*.

I.

ijjat, np.: Referring to one´s honour and social reputation in Nepal.

J.

Jana Andolan, np.: People´s Movement in Nepal, happening in 1950 and 1990.

jātra, sk.: Festival.

K.

Kailāsh, sk.: Sacred peak and home of Shiva at the *Kailāsh* Range in Tibet.

kirāta, np.: Inhabitants of the mountains, particularly in the Himalaya, and believed to have Sino-Tibetan origins.

L.

lokta, np.: Handmade paper from Nepal.

M.

Macchendrānāth, np.: Saint who received the yoga teachings from Shiva, and guru of *Gorakhnāth*.

madhyadeśī, sk.: An "inhabitant of the plains", an Indian.

Mañjuśrī, sk.: A bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism.

Meru, sk.: sacred five-peaked mountain, considered to be the centre of all universes.

mleccha, sk.: Referred to foreigners in ancient India as a derogatory term.

mukhtiyār, np.: The Commander-in-Chief of the Nepalese Army.

Muluki Ain, np.: The National Code, which includes the criminal, civil and social procedures of Nepal.

N.

Nārāyana, sk.: Another name for Vishnu.

nāṭya śāstra, sk.: Ancient Hindu text on the performing arts such as theatre, dance and music, dated between 200 BC and 200 AD.

newār, np.: Caste of artists. Believed to be the original inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley.

Nepāl, np.: Ancient name of Kathmandu Valley´s area.

P.

parbatiyā, np.: Name given to those "belonging to the mountains".

Paśupati, sk.: Incarnation of Shiva as the "Lord of the Animals".

Paśupatināth, sk.: Pilgrimage site and temples of Lord *Paśupati*, situated on the

bank of the Bagmati River in Kathmandu.

paubhā, nw.: Traditional religious painting made by the *citrakār*. The Tibetan equivalent is known as Thangka.

prakṛti, sk.: The feminine and active energy of nature, symbol of time.

pramāṇa, sk.: Theory of proportions and measurement in Indian art.

puruṣa, sk: Male energy, consciousness.

R.

raksi, np.: Alcoholic liquor, typical of the *newār*.

rasa, sk.: Meaning "juice, essence or taste", it is the aesthetical flavour of any visual, literary or musical work that evokes an emotion in the audience.

Ṛgveda, sk.: The oldest and most important of the four Vedas.

rūpabheda, sk.: Aesthetical term that highlights the importance of accurate drawing of the forms depending on the subject depicted.

S.

sadāratilāka tantra, sk.: Dated circa 800 AD, this is a collection of mantras and instructions for the worship of the Gods.

sāṃkhya, sk.: One of the six schools of Hindu philosophy, and possibly the oldest one.

Śāntiniketan, sk.: A small town near Bolpur, in the Birbhum district of West Bengal.

sandhābhāṣa, sk.: "The twilight language", is a secret formula for the writing of the Tantra.

śikhara, sk.: Concept used for the construction of temples in India and Nepal in the shape of a mountain peak.

śilpa śāstra, sk.: "The Science of *Śilpa*", it refers to the numerous Hindu texts that describe the design rules for arts and crafts.

sirjanā, np.: Equivalent to "creation".

Śrī Vidyā, sk.: Tantric religious system in Hinduism devoted to the Goddess.

stūpa, sk.: Dome-shaped building erected as a Buddhist shrine.

Sumeru, sk.: Equivalent to Mount Meru.

Surya, sk.: Vedic God of sun.

Swayambhunāth, np.: Ancient religious complex on the top of a cliff in Kathmandu Valley, with a big *stūpa* dedicated to this deity.

T.

Taleju, np.: Tantrik Goddess worshipped by the *newār*.

Tantrāloka, sk.: "The Light of Tantra", it is a manuscript written by Abhinavagupta in the 11th century and where the aesthetics of tantric art are specified.

thākāli, np.: The eldest member of a guṭhi, therefore its main chief.

thāru, np.: Ethnicity from the jungles of Tarai, at the south of Nepal.

toraṇa, sk.: Decoration above a door or a window in a Nepalese house or temple.

thyāsapu, np.: Journal with inscriptions about ancient *Nepāl*.

U.

Umāmaheśvara, sk.: God Shiva with his wife Parbati.

V.

vaṃśāvalī, np.: Nepalese chronicles with great significance in the study of the country´s ancient history and tradition.

varṇika bhaṅga, sk.: Knowledge and regulations of color scheme in Indian art.

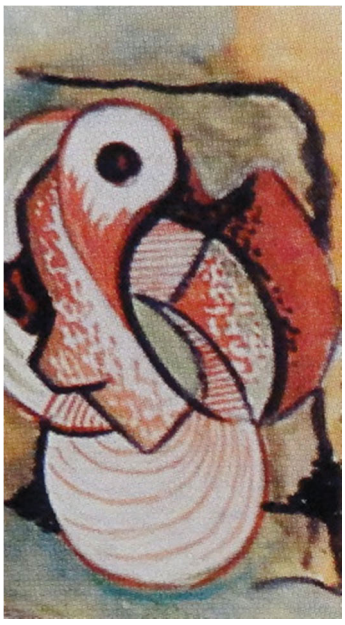
***vāstu puruṣa* mandala**, sk.: Special diagram for temple design in India and Nepal, following the representation of the cosmos at small scale.

Annex 1

Catalogue

Amatya, Gehendra Man (1937)

This painter studied Commerce at Tri Chandra College, which in those times was affiliated to Patna University in India. At the same time, he was trained in Fine Arts by Chandra Man Singh Maskey, and in later stages by the French abstract painter Nicolai Michoutouchkine. Besides, he attended a two years training course in Commercial Design at the Ford Foundation Centre, established in Kathmandu in 1958 by Mr. Alex Waldermann from Germany. After this, Amatya would be employed by the Panchayat Government of Nepal as a Designer at the Publicity Department of Information, collaborating with the system until its fall.



Gehendra Man Amatya, 1968. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

One of the first promoters of the idea of abstract art in the *avant-garde* painting of Nepal, since 1956 Amatya was part of a considerable number of solo and group art shows, such as his first exhibition curated by Nicolai Michoutouchkine at the Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra. Besides, until 1975 he participated in every one of the NAFA´s *National Art Exhibitions*, and even awarded a consolation prize in the *First National Art Exhibition* for his painting "The End of Beauty", in 1965.

Extracts of Gehendra Man Amatya, personal communication with the author. Several interviews in March and April 2015.

"During the times of the Panchayat I worked for the Government as a poster designer. I did hundreds of illustrations to promote the Panchayat system. However, when I came back home I made cartoons and political illustrations for the Nepali Congress Party."

“Almost at the end of the Panchayat system, I was imprisoned for a week by King Birendra because I made a political cartoon in which I represented the King looking into a mirror while saluting to himself in a military pose. This cartoon was taken and destroyed by the police.”

“The Panchayat regime is like Communism in China. King Mahendra imitated Mao Tse Tung´s speech and wanted to eliminate the Nepali Congress Party. The only difference between Communist China and the Panchayat in Nepal is its name."

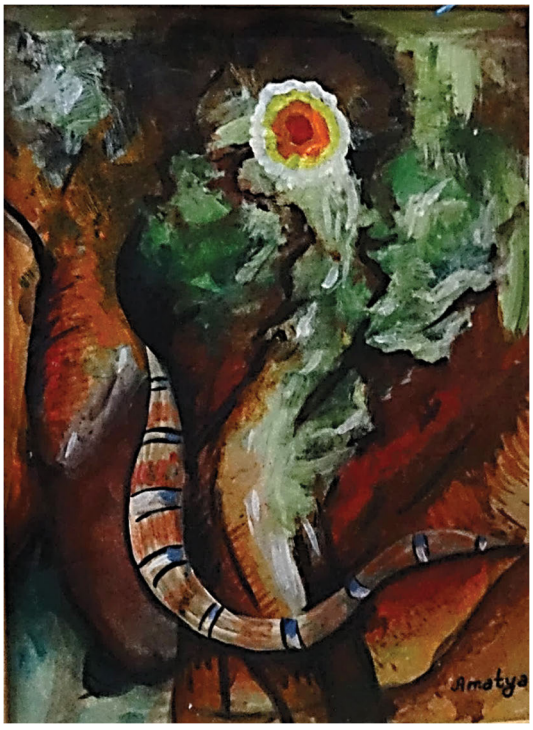
“Lain Singh Bangdel´s painting is peaceful and sober, mine is aggressive. Bangdel never painted political painting, but I was very political since my first one-man painting show, where I exhibited many paintings about violence, war, rape, etc.”

“Before painting abstract art, I painted many sketches about Nepalese festivals and sacrifices. One of my earliest paintings during my youth was “Blood for the God”, where I represented a buffalo sacrifice where the blood splashes towards the Goddess face. For this painting I got a special prize in an international young art exhibition in Delhi.”

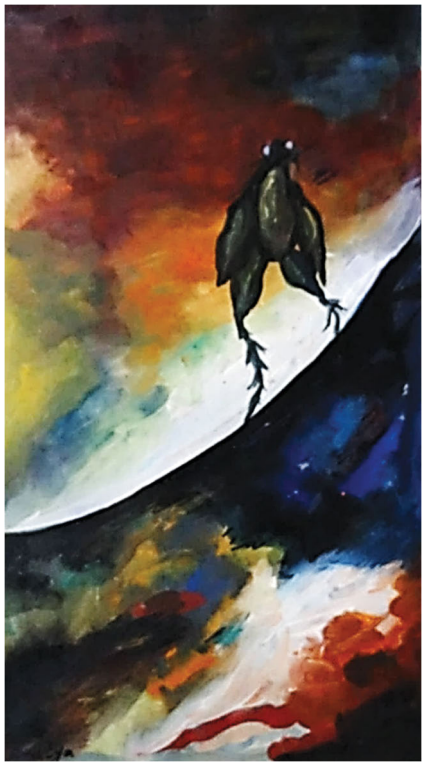
“In abstract art you cannot say from where the painting comes from. That is why in some of my semi-abstract works I include Nepalese symbols, such as Buddha´s eyes or temples. When Bangdel used the abstract style he also depicts mountains or cultural elements, and even entitling his works with significant titles such as “Village”, “Landscape”, etc.”

“In Nepal most of the tourists purchase images of landscapes, mountains, Pagodas. Also, Nepalese buyers only buy scenarios of mountains and portraits of the people of Nepal. For this reason, I sold many of my abstract paintings to Indian and Korean foreigners, who value the quality of my art.”

Gehendra Man Amatya. © Collection of Ton Son Kim. Source: Photo courtesy of Ton Son Kim, 2017.



Gehendra Man Amatya. © Collection of Ton Son Kim. Source: Photo courtesy of Ton Son Kim, 2017.



Gehendra Man Amatya. © Collection of Ton Son Kim. Source: Photo courtesy of Ton Son Kim, 2017.

Gehendra Man Amatya, c. 1968. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

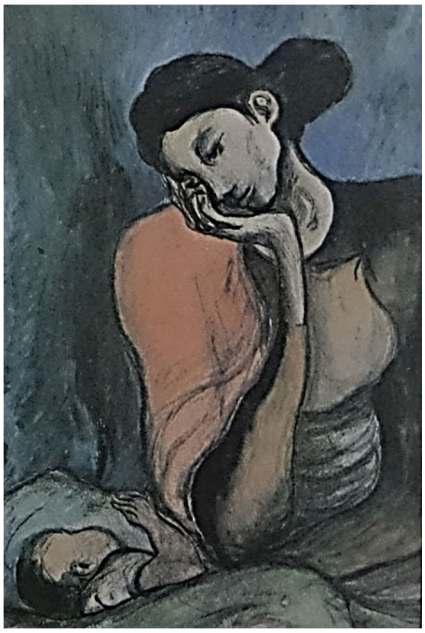
Gehendra Man Amatya. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

Gehendra Man Amatya. Source: Photo courtesy of Gehendra Man Amatya, 2015.

Bangdel, Lain Singh (1919-2002)

Bangdel was born in Tukvar, nearby Darjeeling, where he spent his childhood among the Nepalese expatriates residing in the area. In 1939 he joined the Government School of Art in Calcutta as a Fine Arts student, while he was employed as a Graphic Designer at the D.J. Keymer advertising agency. Later in 1952 Bangdel moved to Paris in order to carry on with his painting studies at L´École des Beaux Arts, followed by his short career as the Art Director of the Astral Art Group advertising agency in London.

In 1962 Lain Singh Bangdel hold his first art retrospective in Kathmandu with huge success and inspiration for the creative development of modern art according to the "Nepaliness" ideals. Besides, he was also accepted as member of the RNA for his literary works, inspired in the issue of the Nepalese-Ghurkali in exile. As one of the leading figures during the Panchayat, in 1977 Bangdel would be appointed as Chairman of NAFA, under the RNA premises, and in 1984 Chancellor of the whole RNA until his resignation in 1989.



Lain Singh Bangdel, "Mother and Child," 1955. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991).

Besides, due to his significant contribution with the upcoming studies of traditional art in Nepal, in 1968 Bangdel was granted with a Fulbright Visiting Professor at Denison University, Ohio, USA, where he lectured for a year. It was after visiting the Asian art museums in the United States how Bangdel realised about the issue of the stolen sculptures of Nepal, denouncing the situation after the Panchayat system fall with the publication of the book *Stolen Images of Nepal*[446].

[446] Information retrieved from Bangdel and Messerschmidt, *Against the Current*.

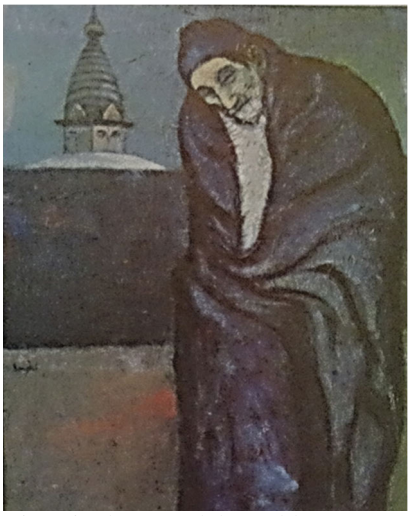
Extracts of his daughter Dina Bangdel, personal communication with the author, May 23, 2015.

"Lain Singh Bangdel had a strong sense of community. He was very nationalistic and he always felt himself as Nepalese. That´s why many of his works from Paris were focused on Nepalese themes, even though he had never been in Nepal before. The idea of "imagining Nepal" while he was not there is a very important aspect of his work."

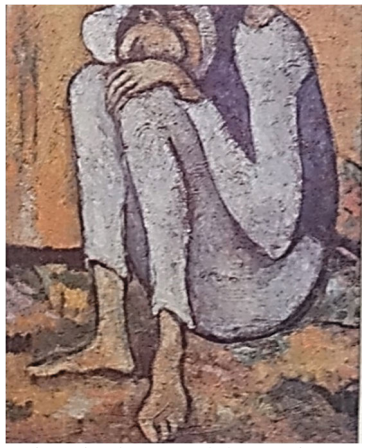
"For me, the shift of modern art in Nepal started with Bangdel, not with Amatya. Because it is not about who was the First, it is about the impact."

"When the book *Stolen Images of Nepal* was about to be published in Bangkok, there was a big fire in the printing press. Therefore my father had to publish this book though the RNA. In know personally that my father got death threats for this enterprise, but he went ahead."

"Bangdel was fairly apolitical because he had friends from every ideology. However, I think he was a democrat. He never talked against the Panchayat system or the King. But in 1991, when the Democracy movement started, he did significant art works on this theme. To me this says a lot without saying."



Lain Singh Bangdel, "Old Man and Stupa," 1956. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991), image 14.



Lain Singh Bangdel, "Fatigue," 1956. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991), image 20.

Fig. 138: Marc Vaux, "Lain Singh Bangdel art work," c. 1950. Photograph. © Centre Pompidou – MNAM/CCI – Bibliothèque Kandinsky-Fonds Marc Vaux. Source: Photo courtesy of Valerie Juilliard, Centre Pompidou, 2018.

Marc Vaux, "Lain Singh Bangdel art work," c. 1950. Photograph. © Centre Pompidou – MNAM/CCI – Bibliothèque Kandinsky-Fonds Marc Vaux. Source: Photo courtesy of Valerie Juilliard, Centre Pompidou, 2018.

Marc Vaux, "Lain Singh Bangdel art work," c. 1950. Photograph. © Centre Pompidou – MNAM/CCI – Bibliothèque Kandinsky-Fonds Marc Vaux. Source: Photo courtesy of Valerie Juilliard, Centre Pompidou, 2018.

Lain Singh Bangdel, "Landscape," 1976. Oil on canvas. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991), image 44

Lain Singh Bangdel, 1978. Oil on canvas. Source: *Lain Singh Bangdel, Fifty Years of His Art*, ed. Dina Bangdel (Kathmandu: M. K. Bangdel, 1991).

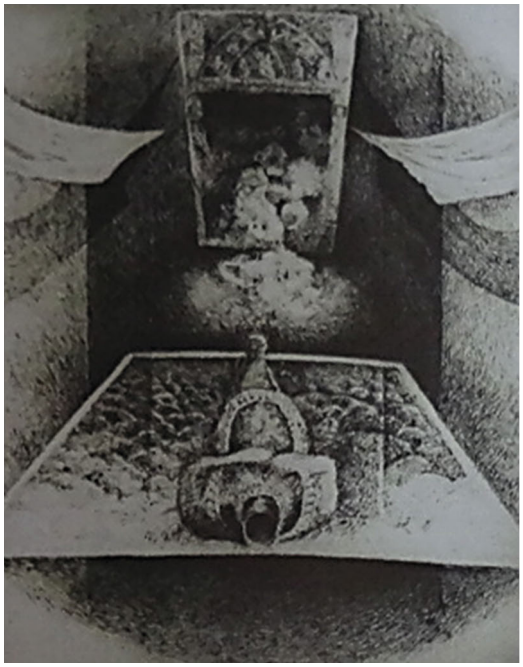
Baral, Durga (1943)

Already at the beginning of his career, Durga Baral´s drawing skills were awarded with the first prize in the *First National Art Exhibition* of 1965, and also with the third prize and best price at these *National Exhibitions* of 1973 and 1982 respectively. Coinciding with these, in 1973 he held a solo retrospective at NAFA´s exhibition hall, and later in 1983 another one at the Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra. Besides, it has to be highlighted his participation in numerous international art exhibitions along with other modern artists from Nepal, such as the *Nepali Paintings Exhibition* at the Museum of Oriental art in Moscow, or the *Festival of Contemporary Art Show* at the Fukuoka Museum in Japan, 1980. Trained in Graphic Art at the Japanese National Commission of UNESCO, Tokio, in 1967, Durga Baral is currently working as a political cartoonists in The Kathmandu Post, and resides in his hometown Pokhara[447].

Durga Baral, "*Prasab Bedana*". Source: *Samayako Anuhar Ra Sambedanaka Rangaharu. Durga Baral* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2004) catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2004.

[447] Information retrieved from *Samayako Anuhar Ra Sambedanaka Rangaharu. Durga Baral* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2004) catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2004.

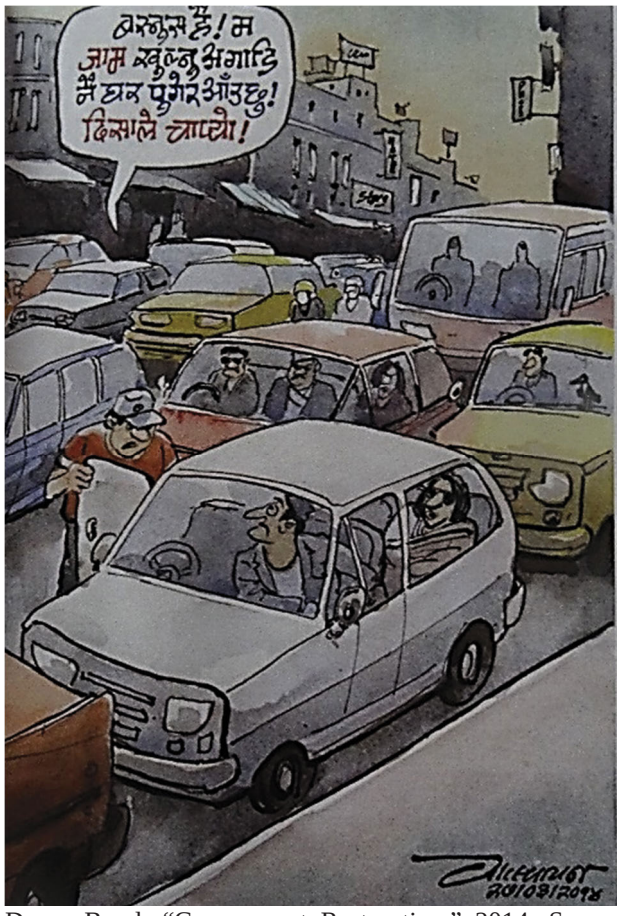
Durga Baral, "*Chowk series.*" Source: *Samayako Anuhar Ra Sambedanaka Rangaharu. Durga Baral* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2004) catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2004.



Durga Baral, "*Chowk series.*" Source: *Samayako Anuhar Ra Sambedanaka Rangaharu. Durga Baral* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2004) catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2004.

Durga Baral, "*Tamsuk series.*" Source: *Samayako Anuhar Ra Sambedanaka Rangaharu. Durga Baral* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2004) catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2004.

Durga Baral, “Government Restoration,” 2014. Source: Prabal Bikram Shah, “Satire in Durga Baral´s Cartoons” (Thesis, Tribhuvan University, 2012).



Durga Baral, “Government Restoration,” 2014. Source: Prabal Bikram Shah, “Satire in Durga Baral´s Cartoons” (Thesis, Tribhuvan University, 2012).

Durga Baral, 2016. Source: Durga Baral Twitter, accessed June 6, 2018, https://twitter.com/DurgaBaral1

Bhaukajee, Ram Kumar (c.1950)

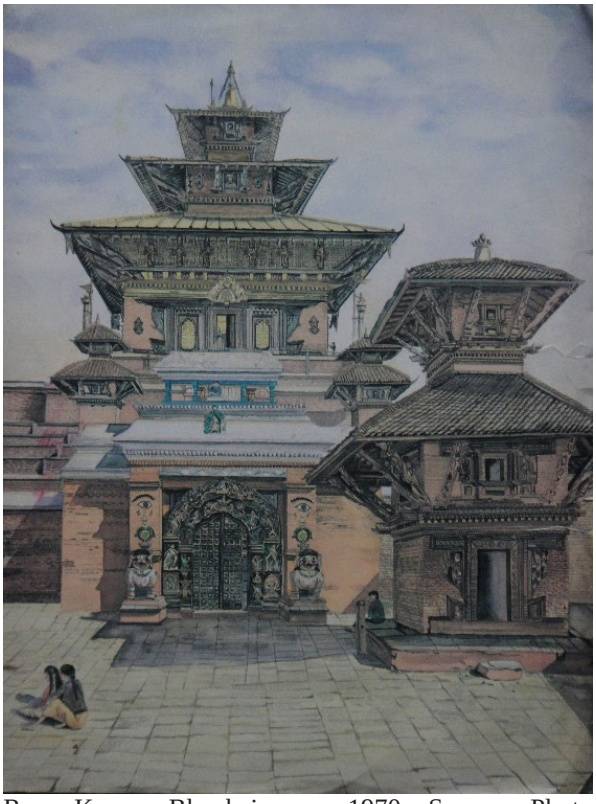
Bhaukajee was initially trained at the Lalitkala Mavidhyalaya in Kathmandu, when his picturesque landscapes were awarded with the students prize at the *Ninth National Art Exhibition* of 1973. In 1976 he travelled to Moscow in order to attend a Master of Arts, specialized in Easel Painting, thanks to a scholarship offered by His Majesty´s Government of Nepal and Ministry of Education and Culture of the URSS. In 1988 Bhaukajee was acknowledged as the first Ph.D. scholar about modern art in Nepal, for his research "*Contemporary Paintings of Nepal*., PhD diss., Moscow State Art Institute, 1988," translated by Tatiana Voronina for the present work. Working as a controversial art critic nowadays, Bhaukajee continously demonstrates his patriotic feelings and preocupation for the cultural heritage of is country getting lost, working on the theme "My Nepal" for both his national and international exhibitions.

Extracts of Ram Kumar Bhaukajee, personal communication with the author, April 23, 2015.

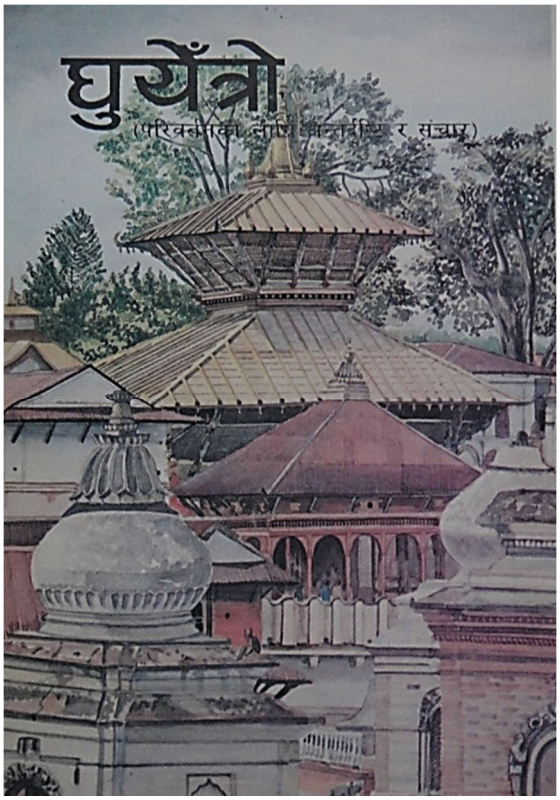
"Before Amatya or Bangdel, abstract art was already in Nepal. Because local painters practiced non-realistic art since ancient times. However, Nepalese artists do not know how to do modern abstract art because there hasn´t been established a proper school to teach that."

"Tantric art is the same in India and in Nepal. The local tantric artists know about this philosophy very well. But the artists who paint tantric symbols in modern ways do it as it is what foreigners want to see."

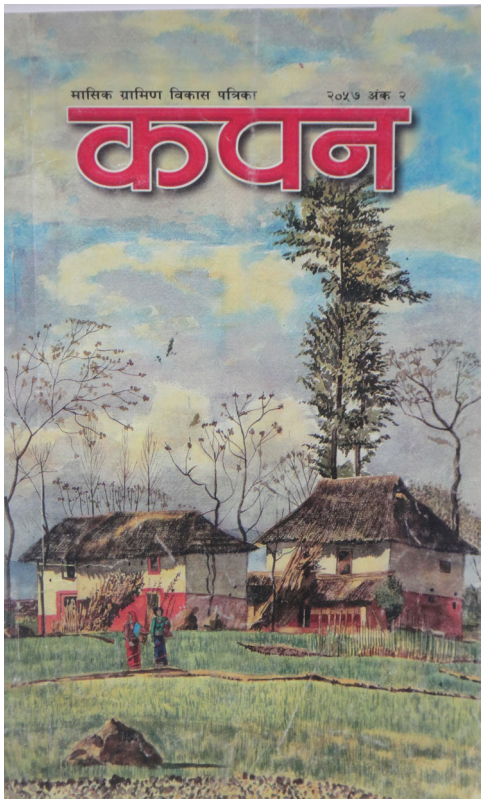
"The King controlled the cultural sector. The majority of the modern artists were with the King, because he was the president of NAFA. And that was the only way to get an opportunity to be accepted as a member."



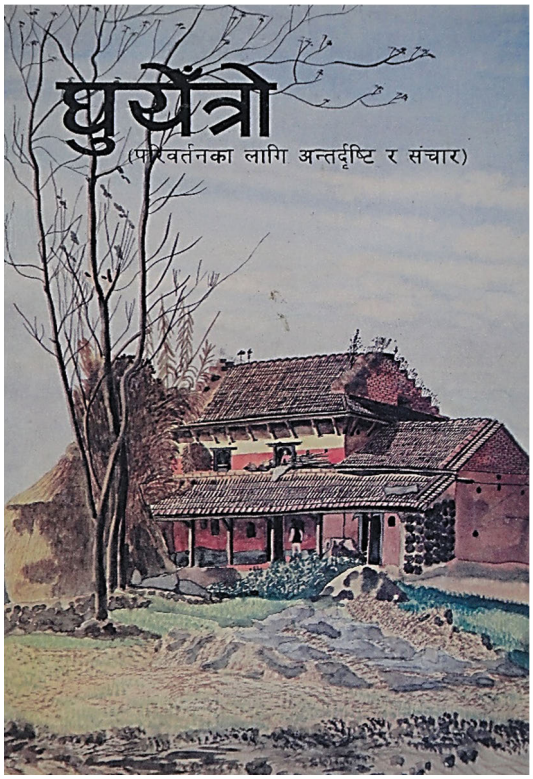
Ram Kumar Bhaukajee, c. 1970. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.



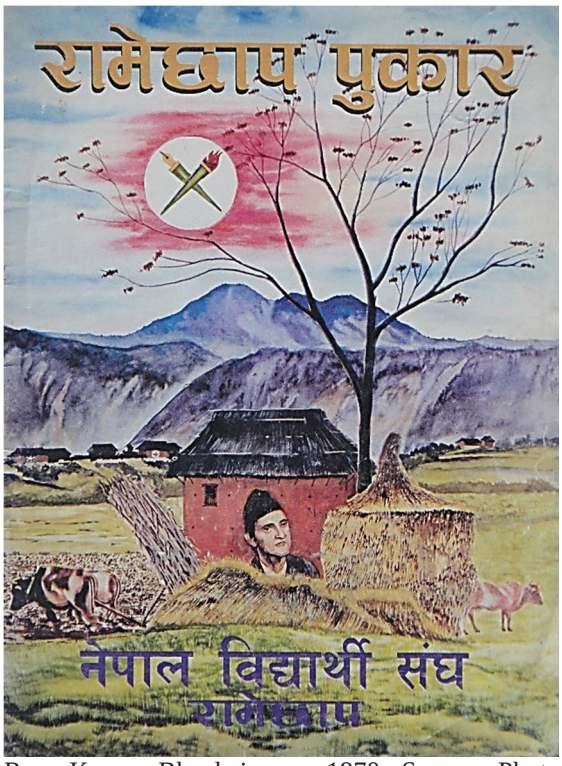
Ram Kumar Bhaukajee, c. 1970. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.



Ram Kumar Bhaukajee, c. 1970. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.



Ram Kumar Bhaukajee, c. 1970. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

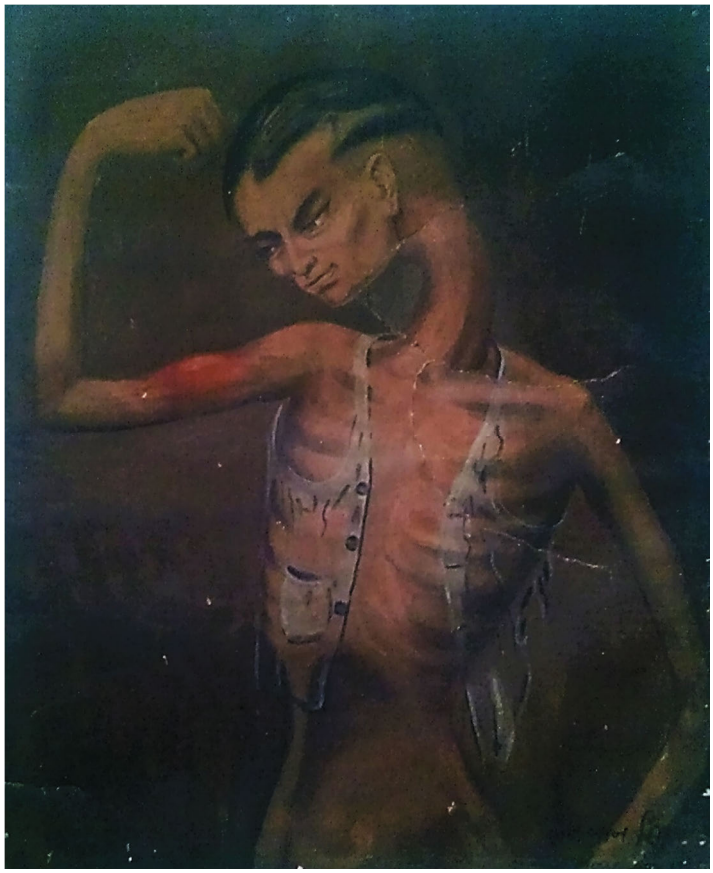


Ram Kumar Bhaukajee, c. 1970. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Ram Kumar Bhaukajee, c. 1970. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

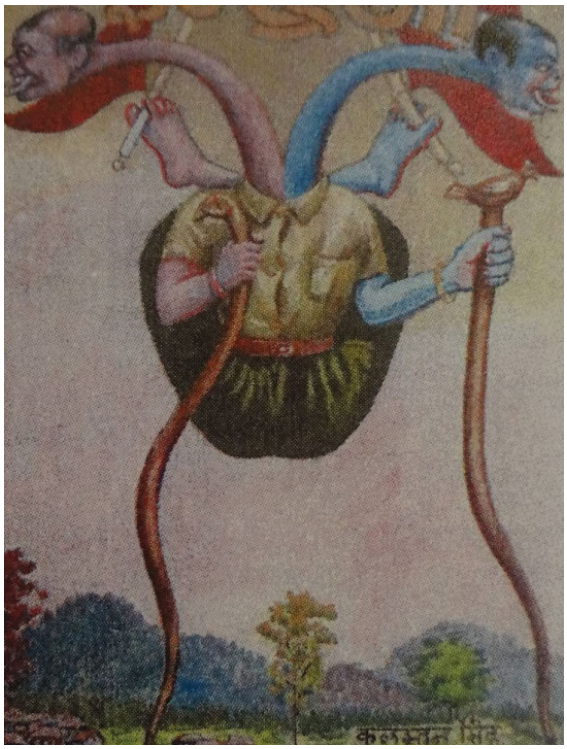
Bhandari, Kul Man Singh (1925-2000)

He was a satiric poet and painter who studied realistic art at the Judda Kala Pathsala since 1941, and for two years. During this period, he took part at the open-air exhibition behind Bhugol Park, for the inauguration of the Juddha Saddhak in 1942. Belonging to a family of farmers, he used to paint as a hobby until he was employed as a cartoonist in Haalkhabar magazine. Later, in 1956, he got a job as a design teacher at the Gharelu Udhyog Bibhag until his retirement in 1995, when he exhibited his ironical paintings in a retrospective at Palpasa Art Gallery[448].



Kul Man Singh Bandhari. © Collection of Kul Man Singh´s family. Source: Photo courtesy of Kul Man Singh´s family, 2017.

[448] Information retrieved from Maharjan, "Late Kul Man Singh Bandhari".



Kul Man Singh Bandhari. © Collection of Kul Man Singh´s family. Source: Photo courtesy of Kul Man Singh´s family, 2017.

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Kul Man Singh Bandhari. © Collection of Kul Man Singh´s family. Source: Photo courtesy of Kul Man Singh´s family, 2017.

Battharai, Surendra Raj (1956-2007)

Being a members of Junkiree and the Young Artists Group (YAG), he received his art education at the Lalitkala Campus from 1971 to 1973, before completing his studies at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), where he had been specialised in woodcut, landscape painting and collage. Once he went back to Nepal in 1981 he was hired as a photographer for the Panchayat´s Ministry of Information. However, in later stages of his career he left this job for his passion of teaching art history at the Lalitkala Campus until the end of his life[449].

Extracts of his son Satyendra Bhattarai, personal communication with the author, February 12, 2015.

"My father was greatly influenced by Lain Singh Bangdel. Along with the Junkiree artists group he participated in many art exhibitions that used to be inaugurated by members of the Royal Family. Particularly Queen Aiswarya and her daughter were usually present and these events, and who were also great poetesses and a painters."

Surendra Raj Bhattarai. Collage. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2015.

[449] Information retrieved from Eureka Bajracharya Shakya, "A Journey in Art. Artist Surendra R. Bhattarai," (Thesis, Tribhuvan University, 2014).

Surendra Raj Bhattarai. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2015.

Surendra Raj Bhattarai. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2015.

Surendra Raj Bhattarai. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2015.

Surendra Raj Bhattarai. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2015.

Surendra Raj Bhattarai. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2015.

Chitrakar, Amar (1920-1999)

Trained by his maternal uncle, Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, in the art of realistic painting, he was one of the court painters hired by the Rana regime as a Naike, or the one who was responsible for filling the ceilings of the sumptuous Western palaces with huge murals. He worked there until 1939, when Bal Krishna Sama got him transferred to his studio, and along with whom he would work for the next twelve years. Besides, Amar Chitrakar was a great portraitist who produced "thousands" of portraits of Prime Minister Juddha Shumshere and other members of the Rana aristocracy.

Amar Chitrakar. © Collection of Jagadish Chitrakar. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2015.

Just after the 1950s political change, Amar was hired as a chief textile designer at the Handicrafts and Cottage Industries Department, while also commissioned by the Shah monarchs for his outstanding skills in the making of royal portraits[450].

Amar Chitrakar, c. 1960. Oil on canvas. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2015.

[450] Information retrieved from Abhi Subedi, "Amar Chitrakar: The man and artist," in *Amar´s Art. Paintings by celebrated court artist Amar Chitrakar,* edited by Lain Sigh Bangdel (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 1992), catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, April 13 through 28, 1991.

Amar Chitrakar, “Moment of rest,” 1991. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2015.

Amar Chitrakar, “Moment of rest,” 1991. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2015.

Amar Chitrakar, “Moment of rest,” 1991. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2015.

Chitrakar, Dil Bahadur (1929-2010)

Another painter trained by Tej Bahadur Chitrakar at Juddha Kala Pathsala who, already since his childhood, used to practice the art of realism through sketching. Hired by the Rana rulers as a court painter, he was one of the muralists who collaborated in the designs of the Gallery Bhaitak. During his creative career Dil Bahadur also worked as an art teacher in several schools and as an illustrator in Janak Education Materials Centre, where the Government used to design educative books.

Awarded first prize at the *Second National Art Exhibition* in 1966 for his realistic portrait of a Nepalese old woman, during this time he received a UNESCO fellowship to visit the European capitals and get inspiration in the Western styles. After this, Dil Bhadur started to represent his country´s traditional environment in more modern ways, many of them done with pastel, and holding an exhibition with these paintings at the Max Gallery in 1968, and the J Art Gallery a few years later[451].

Dil Bahadur Chitrakar. © Collection of the artist´s family. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2017.

[451] Information retireved from Sampada Malla, "Almost Divine," *Spaces Nepal*, July-August, 2008.

Dil Bahadur Chitrakar. © Collection of the artist´s family. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2017.

Dil Bahadur Chitrakar. © Collection of the artist´s family. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2017.

Dil Bahadur Chitrakar. © Collection of the artist´s family. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist´s family, 2017.

Chitrakar, Jagadish (1947)

Son of the renowned court painter Amar Chitrakar, Jagadish did not seem to be interested in art until 1977. After receiving his studies in economy at Tribhuvan University, he decided to fully dedicate himself to this task. A faithful promoter of the "magic surrealism", in 1979 Jagadish exhibited his paintings for the first time at the Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra. Later in 1987 he was awarded first prize at the *National Art Exhibition*, while being employed at the October Gallery´s Studio-7 theatre for the design of its backstages.

Jagadish Chitrakar, "Temple dwellers," 1981. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Extracts of Jagadish Chitrakar, personal communication with the author, April 23, 2015.

"In the National Art Exhibitions, organized for King Birendra´s birthday, there were two classifications: traditional and modern. However, they were never concerned to study the symbols of the Thangkas. Besides, even if in the modern category there were always realistic portraits, landscapes and so on, the first prize was often awarded to an abstract painting."

"Manohar Man Poon was ignored by most of the Nepalese society. He lived in a poor and impossible condition through his whole life."

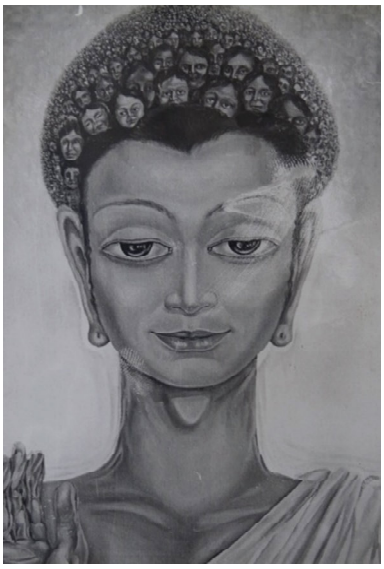
"In Studio-71 I designed a backdrop of Goddess Durga. When I finished it a Nepalese lady came to offer a puja to the image."

Jagadish Chitrakar, “Smoker,” 1981. © Collection of Sangeeta Thapa. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Jagadish Chitrakar, “City scape of mind,” 1981. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Jagadish Chitrakar, 1981. © Collection of Jagadish Chitrakar. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Jagadish Chitrakar, 1981. © Collection of Jagadish Chitrakar. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.



Jagadish Chitrakar, c. 1980. © Collection of Jagadish Chitrakar. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Jagadish Chitrakar, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Chitrakar, Lok (1961)

Currently working as a freelance *paubhā* painter at the Simrik Atelier, located in Patan Dhoka, Lok is a Buddhist traditional artists trained in this technique by Min Bahadur Shakya, at the Nagarjuna Institute on Buddhism. In the 1990s he received a scholarship that allowed him to complete his training at the Ueda Bijutsu-Ten Japanese art gallery, where he learnt new techniques sometimes appreciated in his original *paubhā* styles. Despite this, he often tries to stick with the traditional way of making such art, as a way to preserve it.

Extracts of Lok Chitrakar, personal communication with the author, January 15, 2015.

"Even if I belong to the *citrakār* caste of painters I did not learn how to paint from my father. I got a job to paint *paubhā* art in a British company specialized in producing these type of paintings so as to sell them abroad. The majority of the traditional artists of today worked for that company until it was closed in the 1970s."

"Contemporary art in Nepal cannot be developed without traditional art. Contemporary art must develop from its tradition."

"There are very few collectors in Nepalese art, so artists cannot survive from their paintings. That is why they also try to survive by selling to the tourists."

"We are all the time trying to learn and go towards the spiritual. Every artist is spiritually born. Artists nowadays learn from the outside, and they perform it here with contemporary art. This also happened in the ancient times, when the first rituals were established. Thus the question is, how do we use art? For me every art, contemporary or religious, all around the world, has the object of spirituality."

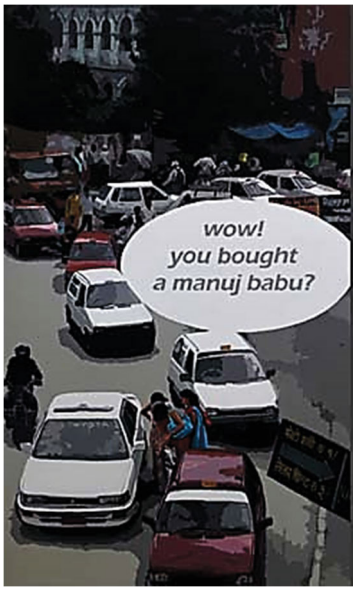
Lok Chitrakar. Source: Mandala Thangka, accessed June 3, 2017, http://www.nepalrhd.com/mandala/jpgman/lokchitrakar/manlok.html

Lok Chitrakar. Source: Mandala Thangka, accessed June 3, 2017, http://www.nepalrhd.com/mandala/jpgman/lokchitrakar/manlok.html

Lok Chitrakar, 2012. *KIAF. Earth Body and Mind.* Source: Kathmandu Triennale, accessed May 6, 2018, http://kt.artmandu.org/gallery/kiaf-2012-earth-body-mind/

Chitrakar, Sujan (1974)

Follower of the trend of conceptualism in his contemporary practices, Sujan Chitrakar is nowadays a political painter and critical *performer*, hired as Director of the Kathmandu School of Art and Design (KUART), affiliated to the Kathmandu University. Initially trained in commerce and Fine Arts at the Lalitkala Campus in 1994, he completed his studies in the latest creative practices at the Banaras Hindu University in 1999, and followed by a Master in Fine Arts at Delhi University in 2001. During this time the SUTRA group of artists was inaugurated, with Sujan Chitrakar as one of its experimental members.



Sujan Chitrakar, "Let´s talk about ART, baby!" 2015. Source: Kalatirtha, accessed August 15, 2016, http://kalatirtha.com

Extracts of Sujan Chitrakar, personal communication with the author, May 3, 2015.

"I don´t believe that going to the village and making landscapes is going to make you more Nepalese. I think people are mistaken by the fact that they do beautiful mountains, beautiful landscapes and they think it is "so Nepalese". All the way around, the idea of looking at the mountains is Western. In my view, if you want to "be Nepalese", you have to make *paubhā* painting."

"We are all copying. Who is doing a unique thing? I think this has always been part of history, and the building of one´s heritage and root. We should be more receptive than defensive. The question is how to incorporate the new ideas to our past heritage and root."

"I strongly feel that you have the right to appreciate the work of Shashi Bikram Shah as yours, as well as I can appreciate the art of Picasso as mine."

Sujan Chitrakar, “Let´s talk about ART, baby!” 2015. Source: Kalatirtha, accessed August 18, 2018, http://kalatirtha.com/portfolio/

Sujan Chitrakar, “Let´s talk about ART, baby!” 2015. Source: Kalatirtha, accessed August 18, 2018, http://kalatirtha.com/portfolio/

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Sujan Chitrakar, “Let´s talk about ART, baby!” 2015. Source: Kalatirtha, accessed August 18, 2018, http://kalatirtha.com/portfolio/

Chitrakar, Tej Bahadur (1898-1971)

One of the leading figures of the picturesque art movement during the Rana period Tej Bahadur Chitrakar was educated at the Durbar High School. Later, he was employed as a court painter at the Naksha Adda, with the mission of painting European scenarios in the huge backdrop curtains of the personal theatre of the Ranas. Due to his outstanding skills while painting these realistic scenes, in 1921 Tej Bahadur was sent to receive further training at the Government School of Art in Calcutta, along with his counterpart the painter Chandra Man Singh Maskey. He was later hired as principal of the Juddha Kala Pathsala, as the same time as he was leading the developing style of many relevant artists in the years to come. Also, once he was back in Kathmandu, Tej Bahadur Chitrakar was commissioned as a muralist in the Gallery Bhaitak, as well as for production of numerous Rana portraits, many of them part of Mr. Narottam Das Shrestha´s art collection[452].

Extracts of his son Madan Chitrakar, personal communication with the author, March 10, 2015.

"I divide the Nepalese artists in two specific parts. The ones that take it very seriously and the ones that only create myths around themselves."

"Why King Mahendra chose Bangdel and made him the leader, instead of any of the pioneers in mastering the Western styles in Nepal is a good question. Maybe he thought about Tej Bahadur Chitrakar and Chandra Man Singh Maskey as belonging to an earlier generation, so they could not represent the modern thoughts."

[452] Information retrieved from Chitrakar, *Tej Bahadur Chitrakar.*

"Chatu Ratna Utdas was working as a curtain painter in Calcutta, painting theatre backgrounds, when Juddha Shumshere Rana discovered him. According to the legend, when the Prime Minister visited Calcuta he saw one of Chattu Ratna´s curtains in which it was written "We all Nepalese". For such reason, he invited to come back to Nepal and hired him as principal of the Juddha Khala Pathsala during its initial stages."

Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. © Collection of Narottam Das Shrestha. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. © Collection of Narottam Das Shrestha. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. © Collection of Narottam Das Shrestha. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2015.

Dangol, Asha (1973)

Asha Dangol, 2015. Acrylic on canvass. Source: Asha Erina, accessed October 5, 2017, http://asha-erina.com/asha-dongol

Graduated in Fine Arts by Tribhuvan University in 2011, Asha was one of the founders of the Kathsamandap artists group in 1994, along with the abstract painter Prashanta Shretsha. He was awarded first prize at the National Art Exhibition of 2006, his "neo-tantric" representations are today icons of the latest creative movement of pop art in the Kathmandu Valley.

Extracts of Asha Dangol, personal communication with the author, February 16, 2015.

"During the early period of the Kathsamandap artists group, we used to do outdoor sketches in the same way as the students at the Lalikala Campus used to do. And discuss how to develop our paintings from these sketches."

"To make a living we also made commercial paintings. In 1996 we started to produce greeting cards with Nepalese Lokta paper, but also illustrations or graphic designs for NGOs and travel agencies. Thanks to these commercial works, we were able to practice with our own experimentations in the evenings."

"Most or the colours I chose for my paintings are inspired in our traditional culture. For instance, my work is really inspired in Mithila and *paubhā* arts."

Asha Dangol, “World for New Beginning,”2015. Acrylic on canvass. Source: Asha Erina, accessed October 5, 2017, http://asha-erina.com/asha-dongol

Asha Dangol, “Wheel of Modern Life,”2016. Acrylic on canvass. Source: Asha Erina, accessed October 5, 2017, http://asha-erina.com/asha-dongol

Darshandari, Saurganga (1980)

After her fine arts studies at the Lalitakala Campus in Kathmandu, Saurganga attended a specialized Master in print making at the University of Development Alternative in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Nowadays Saurganga is a renowned performer and printmaker of Nepal, who teaches this technique to the younger generations through the organization of yearly workshops at BINDU, a contemporary group of artists.

Saurganga Darshandari,"My Desire," 2010. Source: Nepal Now Blog, Saurganga Darshandari, accessed January 20, 2018, http://www.nepalnow.blog/project/saurganga-darshandari/

Extracts of Saurganga Darshandari, personal communication with the author, January 1, 2015.

"In Bangladesh I was very impressed about those women wearing a burka, feeling the suffocation they might be feeling. I think that in Nepal, even if we don't wear a burka, the women feel se same suffocation."

"In the traditional culture of the *newār* the block prints have been always used to make *paubhā* paintings, as well as to do patterns for the dresses. Also, many local houses present patterns like snakes drawn at the door´s frames with the same block prints."

"I always try to search for traditional symbols, like the crow, so as I can use it properly. The crow in Nepal represents one of the nine planets of worship. My grandmother used to tell me that when a crow sings is because some news are coming."

“My work is political sometimes. The political environment affects me, as whatever our politicians are doing, it is supposed to be for us.”

“I like performance art because in painting you need tools, as pencils and colours, so as to create something. But in performance I don’t need that kind of tools. My own body is my tool.”

“Nepalese people do not understand very well our contemporary performances because they are always expecting this kind of ritual or spiritual performances, and we go always for the conceptual acts.”

“Thamel art is the art for the tourists. Tourists thinks that here we only do mountains and landscapes, and when they find the contemporary art, they are really surprised.

Saurganga Darshandari, Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Saurganga Darshandari, “Scarf.” Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Duvadi, Keshava (1921-1997)

Keshava Duvadi, "Bathing in Rajastani style," 1948. © Keshava Duvadi Art Museum. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

Belonging to a family of high-caste priests, Duvadi was the first modern artists from Nepal to be trained in Fine Arts at the Sir J.J. School of Arts in Mumbai, in 1946, with a scholarship from India. During his time in India, he participated in several art exhibitions, highlighting the one entitled ***People´s Revolution in Nepal*** in Varanassi, 1950, where he exhibited more than a hundred of political cartoons. He was awarded with the first prize at the ***Lalitpur Arts & Crafts Exhibition in Nepal***, 1951, for his outstanding mastering of the realistic technique, he was also employed as a Graphic Designer for the Panchayat regime, in order to design school books and bank notes. His painting collection is nowadays available for public view at the Keshava Duvadi Art Museum, inaugurated by his family in 2017[457].

Keshava Duvadi, c. 1940. Ink sketch. Source: Photo courtesy of Pradib Duvadi, 2015.

[457] Information retrieved from Keshava Dubadi´s Bio-Data. Courtesy of Pradib Dubadi, 2015.

Keshava Duvadi, “A Typical Indian Village,” 1948. © Keshava Duvadi Art Museum. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

Garg, Urmila Upadayay (1939)

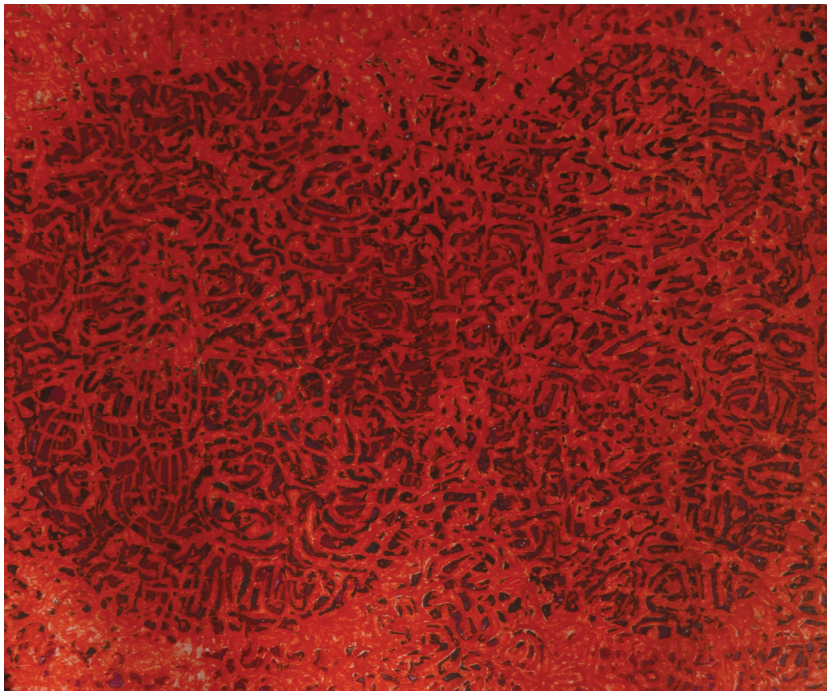
Nowadays working as a Director of the Nepal Creative Art Trust, a non-profitable organization in order to give a chance to Nepalese impoverished women through the commercialization of their textile designs, Urmila Garg was one of the first creative artists of Nepal in experimenting with the avant-garde trends during the 1950s. She was trained in mural painting at the Sir J.J. School of Arts in Mumbai and, after her first solo exhibition in Nepal in 1959, she joined L'École Des Beaux Arts in Paris where she learnt printmaking at the atelier of the renowned British etcher Stanley William Hayter (1927-1988). But in spite of the success of her abstract etchings in both Europe and Canada, in the later stages of her creative career she ended up abandoning her passion in order to dedicate herself to charity jobs.

Extracts of Urmila Uphadayay Garg, personal communication with the author, April 22, 2015.

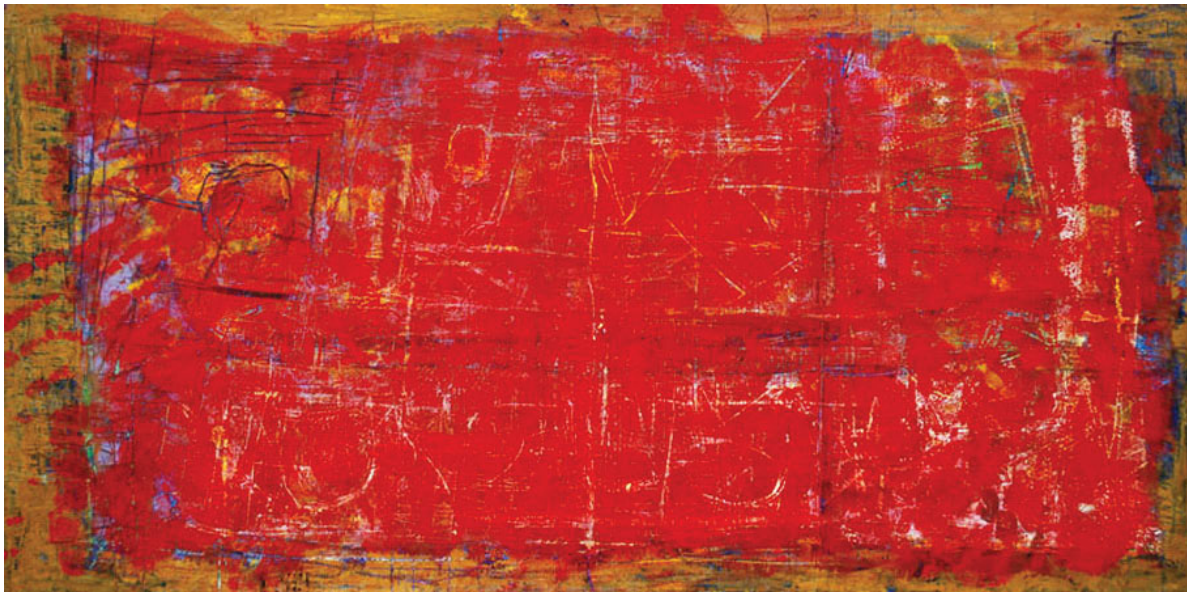
"During my years as a student in Mumbai, I participated in a group exhibition at the Sir J.J. School of Arts. This was a very colourful exhibition in an abstract style, inspired in a trip I did along with four Indian artists to the South. These paintings were also the ones I exhibited later in Kathmandu, in a solo art exhibition inaugurated by Prime Minister B.P. Koirala."

"King Mahendra bought all my early paintings and helped me to get a French Government Scholarship so as to carry on my studies in Paris. Although he asked me to come back and work for Nepal afterwards."

"In Mumbai I also helped to curate an exhibition of Nepalese ancient arts and crafts at the Sir J.J. School of Arts, which was also inaugurated by Prime Minister B.P. Koirala. *The Times of India* published so much about this event."



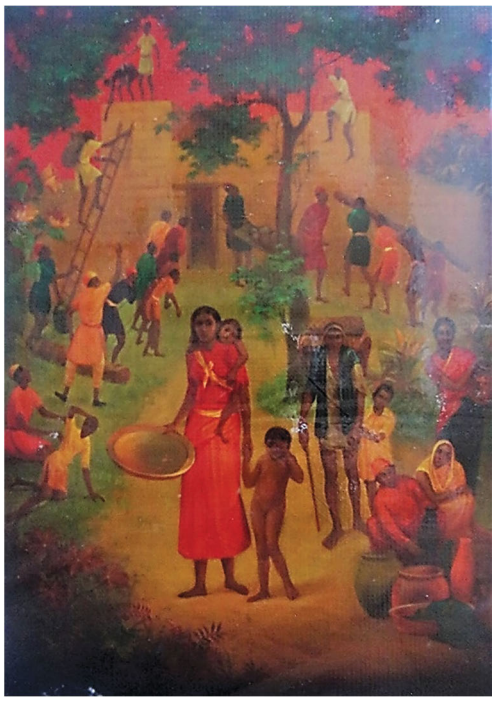
Urmila Upadayay Garg, c. 1970. Etching. Source: Photo courtesy of Birendra Prataph Singh, 2015.



Urmila Upadhaya Garg, "Rato." Oil on canvas. Source: Alba-Avis Gallery, accessed 1 April, 2017, http://www.alba-avis.com/artist.html

Guimirey, Bipin (c. 1950)

Today Chief of the Tribhuvan University´s Campus of Fine Arts, Bipin Guimirey seems to have abandoned his creative practice. However, during his youth his remarkable skills in the art of picturesque realism were awarded with a Russian scholarship to study art at the Moscow Staet Academic Art Institute, where he developed a particular style of painting, interested in the depiction of Nepalese peasants and very much focused on the political style of social realism.



Bipin Guimirey, c. 1970. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Extracts of Bipin Ghimirey, personal communication with the author, May 19, 2015.

"There are not new movements in modern art of Nepal. There are only copies about what is happening in the West. But there are no new movements, like Picasso in his time. Also in traditional art there is no creativity. It is only about painting gods and goddesses."

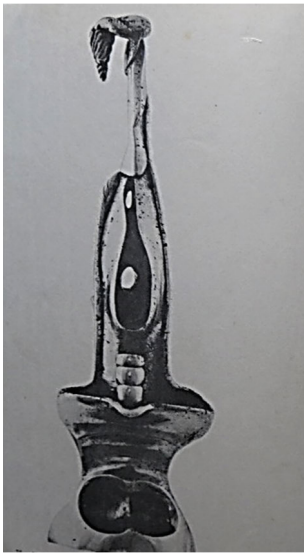
"The Soviet Union used to invite the Nepalese modern artists to make art exhibitions in Moscow. They also gave us scholarships to study there. During the times I was studying in Russia, there were no Indian students yet. They came later."

"You could not paint or write against the Panchayat system. King Birendra was an open-minded person, but there were people around him with a different mind."

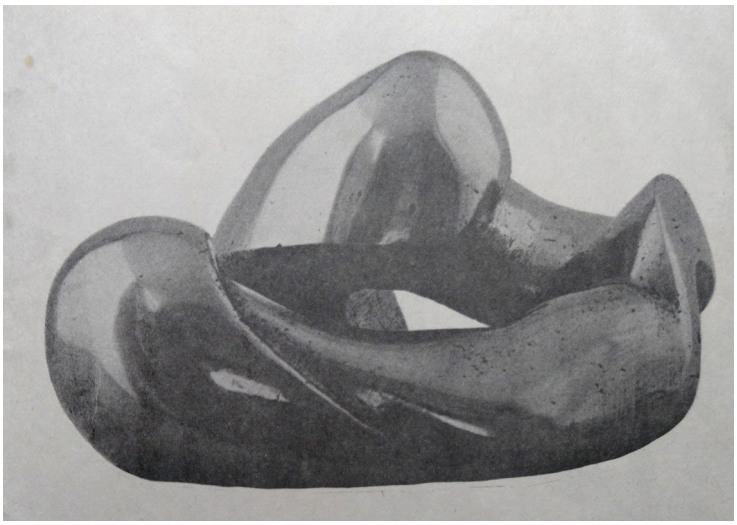
Bipin Guimirey, c. 1970. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Giri, Pramila (1946)

A renowned "neo-tantric" sculptor and painter, residing in Norway, Pramila was one of the few Nepalese artists to study at the Tagore Kala Bhawan in *Śāntiniketan* in 1961-65, followed by a Master in Fine Arts at the California State University, United States, in 1975. As a member of NAFA, while in the *First National Art Exhibition* she was symbolically awarded with a consolation prize, it would be in the *Fifth* one, in 1968, when her abstract sculpture would be prized first. Through her creative career, Pramila has participated in a considerable number of national and international art exhibitions, presenting her organic forms inspired in the natural elements of the Himalaya[453].



Pramila Giri, 1982. *Meditation and Reflections. Pramila Giri,* catalogue of an exhibition at NAFA, Kathmandu, May 21, 1982.

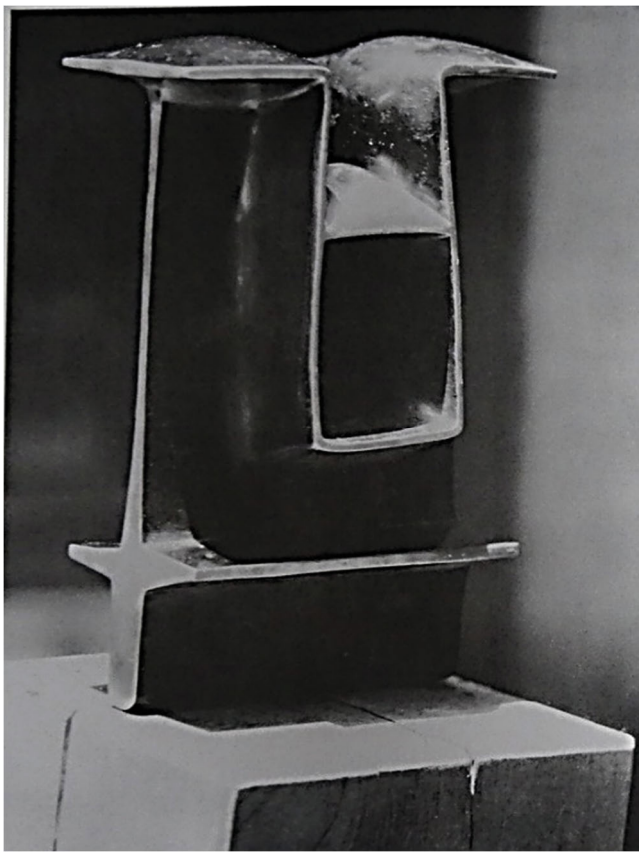


Pramila Giri, 1982. *Meditation and Reflections. Pramila Giri,* catalogue of an exhibition at NAFA, Kathmandu, May 21, 1982.

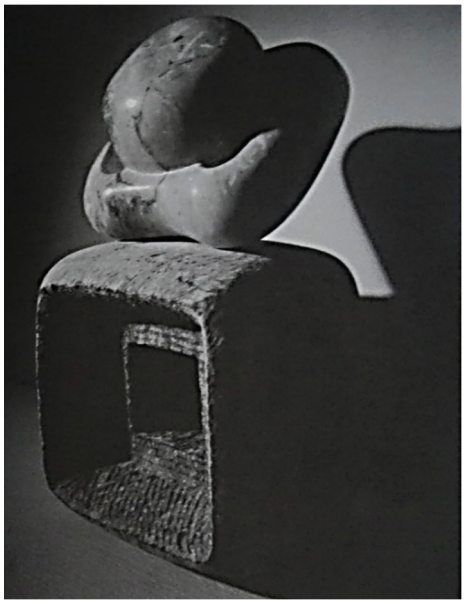
[453] Information retrieved from *Pramila Giri. "Search for Human Values" Sculpture / Painting (*Kathmandu: Nepal Art Council, 2016) catalogue of an exhibition at Nepal Art Council, Kathmandu, October 22 through November 20, 2016.

Pramila Giri, “Tibet series I,” 1991. Oil on canvas. Source: *Pramila Giri. “Search for Human Values” Sculpture / Painting (*Kathmandu: Nepal Art Council, 2016) catalogue of an exhibition at Nepal Art Council, Kathmandu, October 22 through November 20, 2016.

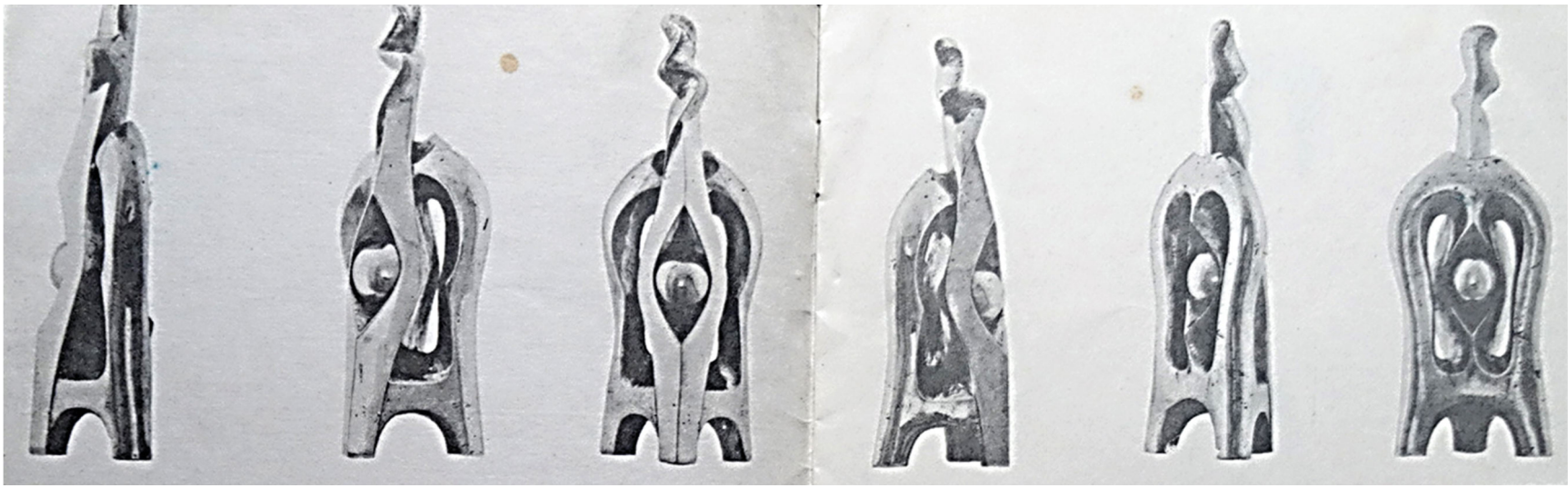
Pramila Giri, “Tibet series II,” 1991. Oil on canvas. Source: *Pramila Giri. “Search for Human Values” Sculpture / Painting (*Kathmandu: Nepal Art Council, 2016) catalogue of an exhibition at Nepal Art Council, Kathmandu, October 22 through November 20, 2016.



Pramila Giri, "Bhairav II," 1994. Source: ***Pramila Giri. "Search for Human Values" Sculpture / Painting (***Kathmandu: Nepal Art Council, 2016) catalogue of an exhibition at Nepal Art Council, Kathmandu, October 22 through November 20, 2016



Pramila Giri, "Mandala," 1991. Source: ***Pramila Giri. "Search for Human Values" Sculpture / Painting (***Kathmandu: Nepal Art Council, 2016) catalogue of an exhibition at Nepal Art Council, Kathmandu, October 22 through November 20, 2016



Pramila Giri, 1982. ***Meditation and Reflections. Pramila Giri,*** catalogue of an exhibition at NAFA, Kathmandu, May 21, 1982.

Grela, Ragini Upadayay (c. 1970)

Ragini Upadhayay, born in the southern area of the jungles of Tarai, is a painter and etcher, mostly concerned with feminist issues, who was appointed as the first women Chancellor of NAFA, the Nepal Academy of Fine Arts, in 2015. After her first art exhibition, organised at NAFA in 1979, she headed to Lucknow so as to complete her fine arts studies in 1982. In 1989 she was awarded with a scholarship for the Gobernment of Germany in order to carry on her studies in printmaking at the Academie der Künste in Berlin. Her works, inspires in Nepalese folk styles and myths, have been exhibited in numerous occasions in Europe and Asia.

Ragini Upadayay Grela. © Collection of Ragini Upadayay Grela. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Extracts of Ragini Uphadayay Grela, personal communication with the author, February 23, 2015.

"In my country, the Goddesses are worshipped for their power, but women are second hand citizens. Most of them can only study until class seven, and then they are forced to get married. We must learn from nature, as it never makes differences between sexes."

"Sometimes I do self-portraits in order to speak on behalf of the Nepalese women. Once I represented a Goddess with my own face, but some Hindu fundamentalists were offended and sent me many letters of complaint."

Ragini Upadayay Grela. © Collection of Ragini Upadayay Grela. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Ragini Upadayay Grela. © Collection of Ragini Upadayay Grela. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

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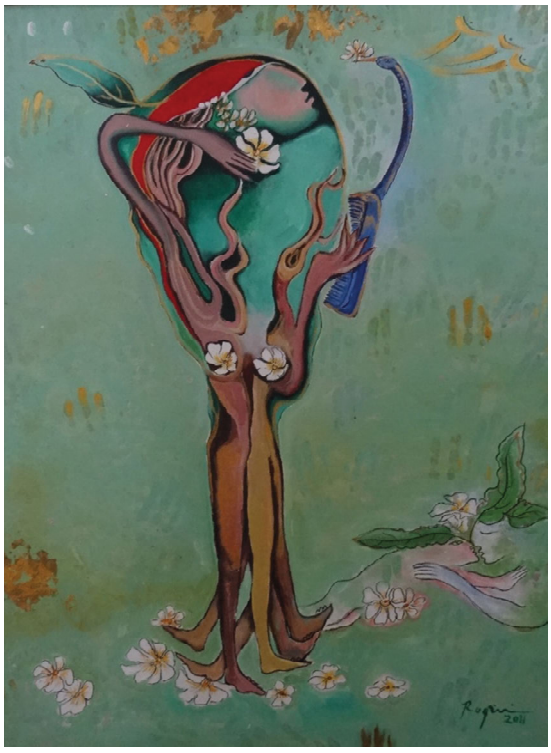
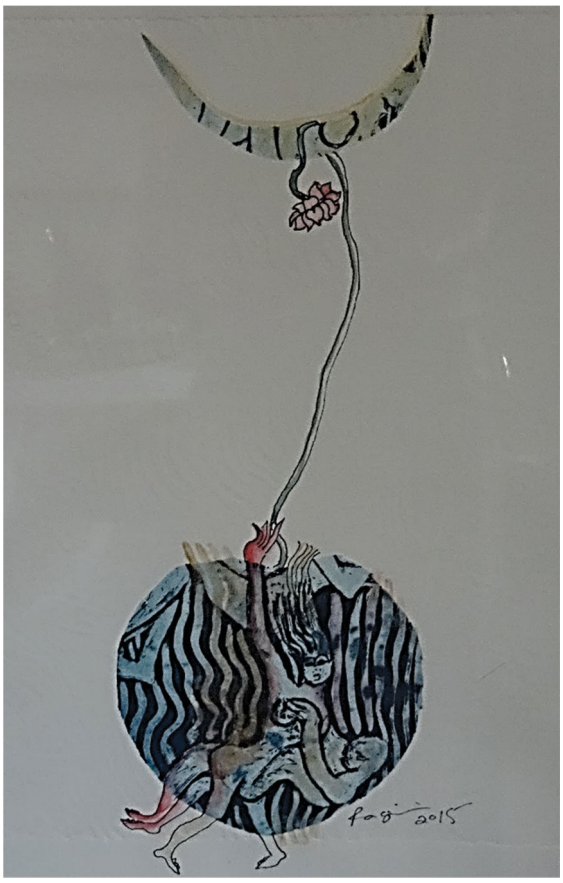


Ragini Upadayay Grela. © Collection of Ragini Upadayay Grela. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

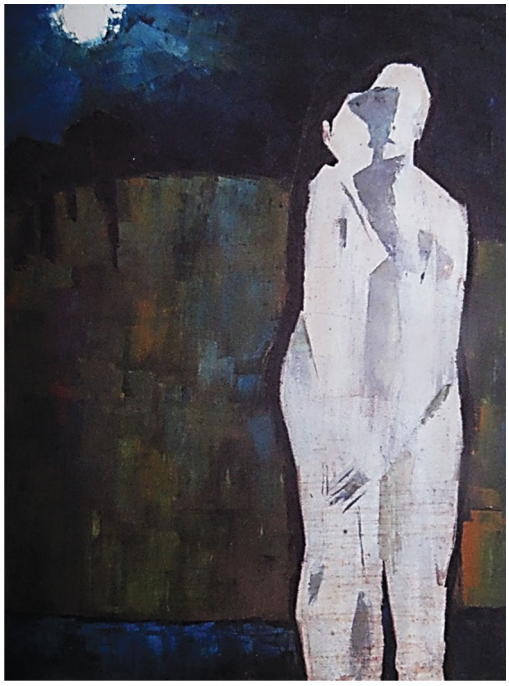
Ragini Upadayay Grela, 2015. Etching © Collection of Ragini Upadayay Grela. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.



Ragini Upadayay Grela, 2015. Etching © Collection of Ragini Upadayay Grela. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Joshi, Rama Nanda (1938-1988)

Belonging to a family of astrologers, R.N. Joshi was trained in the avant-garde style at the Sir J.J. School of Arts in Mumbai, with his first exhibition of abstract paintings taking place in 1964, at the Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra, and awarded second prize at the *Second National Art Exhibition* of 1965. An influential painter in the creative context of the 1970s, in 1968 Joshi opened Park Gallery in order to foment the picturesque styles of painting, as the best way to represent his country´s cultural heritage.



Rama Nanda Joshi, "Couple," 1963. © Rama Nanda Joshi Museum. Source: Banshee Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art* (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006).

Besides, he organised several art exhibitions in the Kathmandu Valley with his outstanding watercolours, most of them symbolically entitled as *My land & my people*. Nowadays many of his early and late paintings can be seen at the Rama Nanda Joshi Museum in Park Gallery, Pulchowk, curated by Nabin and Neera Joshi.

Extracts of his son Nabin Joshi, personal communication with the author, May 11, 2015.

"I wonder how Nepalese artists supported themselves at that time. During the Rana period they were commissioned for their portraits, but in modern times there were hardly places to organise art exhibitions. Therefore, teaching art was the only way to make a living in those times."

"R.N. Joshi suggested to bring art education out in nature, not in the studio, and painting realistic landscapes in modern ways. This is the painting style that still proliferate in Thamel. Somehow that movement was initiated by Joshi."

"Although Joshi new about the abstract trends in modern art, he thought that introducing Nepalese people directly to the abstract styles, without a proper evolution, was a long jump. He wanted first of all to understand his own culture, and only later to develop it into abstract forms."

"Park Gallery became in those times a point of encounter where artists, painters, and common people would come. Also the Royal Family and the Ministers, as they were taking care of Nepalese art at that time."

"R.N. Joshi said that you have to look outside to understand Nepalese culture and turn it into abstract art. However in the 1980s he turned himself inwards in order to understand the tantric philosophy, which is typical from South Asia."

Rama Nanda Joshi, "Untitled," 1965. © Rama Nanda Joshi Museum. Source: Banshee Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art* (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006).

Rama Nanda Joshi, "A Village Tea Shop," 1985. © Maura Dally Collection. Source: Banshee Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art* (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006).

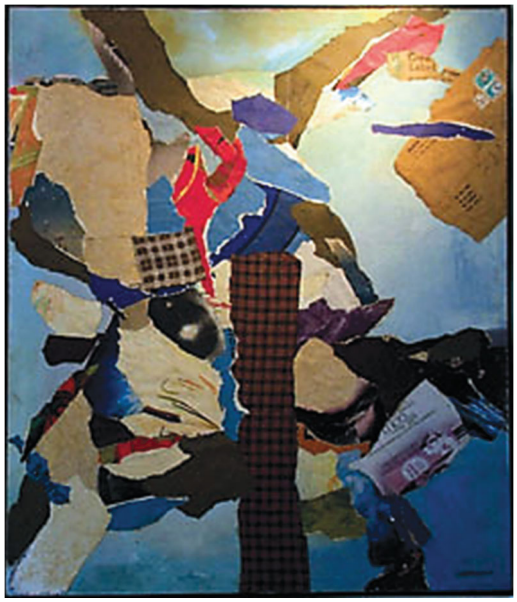
Rama Nanda Joshi, "*Macchendrānāth* Chariot," 1984. © H.C. Sarin Collection, India. Source: Banshee Shrestha, *R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art* (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006).

Rama Nanda Joshi, "Carpet maker," 1982. © Dr. Don and Mrs. Kareen Messerschmidt Collection, USA. Source: Banshee Shrestha, ***R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art*** (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006), 70.

Rama Nanda Joshi, "The musical group of Nepal," 1983. © Stoddart Collection. Source: Banshee Shrestha, ***R. N. Joshi. Widening the Horizon of Nepalese Art*** (Kathmandu: Park Gallery Publication Department, 2006), 70.

Karmacharya, Kanchha Kumar (1948)

Trained at the Juddha Kala Pathsala by Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, in 1967 K.K. Karmacharya was hired as a postage stamps designer and book illustrator for the Panchayat Gobernment of Nepal. His first one-man exhibition took place in NAFA in 1971, although he was already practicing abstract collage since 1965. Nowadays, his artwork has developed into formless representations of the Himalayan scene, representing what he recalls as the rhythm of the motion in our contemporary life.



K.K. Karmacharya, "Collage." Source: Photo courtesy of Cindrey Liu, in Sulaiman Daud, "Strokes of modernity," *Nepali Times*, January 18-24, 2013, accessed February 20, 2015, http://archive.nepalitimes.com/article/life-times/Strokes-of-modernity,103

Extracts of K.K. Karmacharya, personal communication with the author, January 10, 2015.

"In the past Nepalese people found difficult to accept my paintings. But nowadays they start to understand."

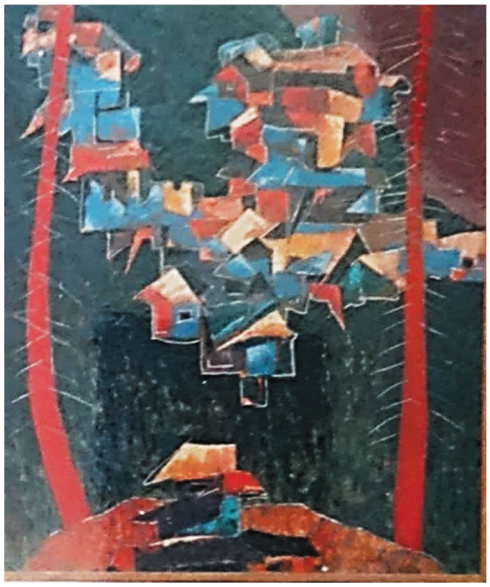
"Nepalese modern artists were influenced by the movements in India, because they studied Fine Arts there. However, once they were back in Nepal they changed their style. Every country is different."

K.K. Karmacharya, “Collage.” Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015

K.K. Karmacharya, “Motion.” Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015

Karmacharya (Nepali), Uttam Prashad (1937)

Belonging to a family of Nepalese immigrants and businessman in Lucknow, who went in exile during the Rana regime, Uttam Karmacharya, better known as Uttam Nepali, was trained in mural art at Lucknow´s College of Arts & Crafts in 1958. Since his return to Kathmandu in 1962, he was hired at the Panchayat´s Publicity Department of Information as a postage stamps designer.



Uttam Nepali, "Back to the Village," 1968. Source: Photo courtesy of Uttam Nepali, 2017.

Also a representative artists in the movement of avant-garde art, in 1969 he curated the Prithvi Art Gallery for a year, and participated in every exhibition organised by NAFA, such as the *Nepali Paining Exhibition* at the Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow, 1975. Besides, his abstract work was awarded with the first prize at the *National Art Exhibition* of 1974.

Extracts of Uttam Nepali, personal communication with the author, April 15, 2015.

"I kept the surname "Nepali" instead of Karmacharya in Lucknow, so as to indicate that I belonged to Nepal."

"My first exhibition of modern art in Nepal was inaugurated by Prime Minister B.P. Koirala, at Saraswoti Sadan. There I presented a mixed style of paintings, and King Mahendra also came to visit the event."

"The Back to the Village was a big movement, not only for painting but also for poetry and literature. It was planned for the development of economy in village areas. So for my exhibition I went to paint directly in the rural scene."

Uttam Nepali. "Village." © Collection of Narottam Das Shrestha. Source: Photo courtesy of Narottam Das Shretsha, 2015.

Mainali, Thakur Prasad (1935)

Takhur Prasaid Mainali. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Nowadays a renowned "neo-tantric" sculptor in Nepal, Mainlai studied sculpture, specialized in wood carving, at the University of Baroda, India, in 1957. Due to the originality of his works, he was awarded first prize at the *Ninth National Art Exhibition* of 1973, and again first prize and the prestigious Birendra Gold Medal in the following year.

Extracts of Thakur Prasad Mainali, personal communication with the author, May 20, 2015.

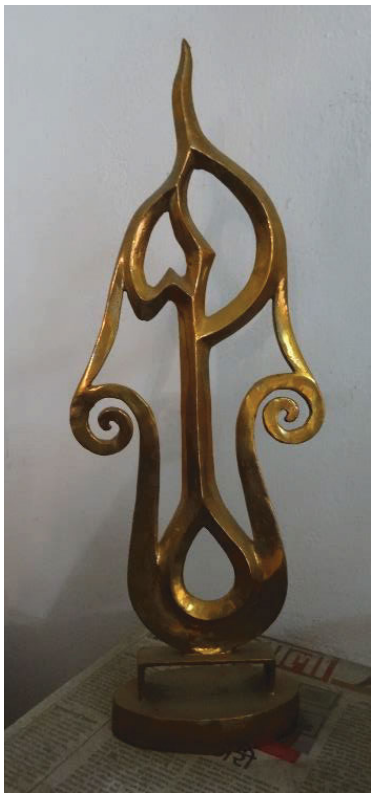
"The Lalitkala Mahavidyala was established as a continuation of the Juddha Kala Pathsala, in the same place. Initially Keshava Duvadi was the Campus Chief, followed by Kalidash Shrestha and Urmila Uphadayay Garg."

"In Baroda my painting professor was B. R. Gujar. He was very good in portraiture and made the portrait of the Royal Family. His exhibition was organised at Boris Lissanevich´s Royal Hotel, and inaugurated by Queen Ratna. Also in this show I exhibited a small sculpture and photographs of other pieces that I produced in India."

"I am influenced by my Bengali professor in Baroda, Shankur Chaudary. I also like Brancussi, Giacometti and Henry Moore."

"The NAFA also opened branches in Pokhara, Taran, etc. The King did not give us money, but we had painting materials imported from London, which we sold to the Nepalese artists in a very low price."

Takhur Prasaid Mainali. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.



Takhur Prasaid Mainali, c.2010. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Takhur Prasaid Mainali, c.2010. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Takhur Prasaid Mainali, c.2010. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Manandhar, Kiran (1957)

Kiran was trained in the picturesque styles at Park Gallery´s "Evening Art Class" until 1981, when he was admitted at the Banaras Hindu University to carry on his education in Fine Arts, specializing himself in printmaking and curating collective art exhibitions along the Junkiree group of artists. Back in Kathmandu, Kiran inaugurated the Palpasa Art Gallery as a hub for the promotion of modern art in the country, and later in 2010 he was appointed as Chancellor of the new NAFA, or the Nepal Academy of Fine Arts.

Kiran Manandhar, "Mandala," 1990. Acrylic on canvas. Source: Photo courtesy of Sagar Manandhar, 2015.

Extracts of his son Sagar Manandhar, personal communication with the author, February 30, 2015.

"My father used to practice Karate and Taekwondo. During his times at the BHU he used to give Karate lessons to the students to make a living. The first time my father met King Birendra was in Varanassi. They talked about the situation of modern art in Nepal."

"His painting series were initially inspired in Krishna, but later he changed his style into something more focused in Nepalese tradition and folk women. He was also inspired in nature and the sculptures of Khajurao, which he visited when he was studying at the BHU for sketching."

Kiran Manandhar, "Democratic movement," 2009. Mixed media on canvas. Source: Photo courtesy of Sagar Manandhar, 2015.

Kiran Manandhar. Source: Photo courtesy of Sagar Manandhar, 2015.

Manandhar, Krishna (1947)

Nowadays Krishna is head Director of the Sirjana College of Fine Arts, where he works along with some members of the previous SKIB-71 and YAG artists groups. After receiving his Fine Arts his training at the Sir J.J. School of Art, Krishna Manandhar joined with the SKIB-71 in order to organize collective art exhibitions in different parts of the Kingdom for more than twenty years. Awarded with the first prize at the *National Art Exhibition* of 1971, Krishna´s colourful art works have been gradually developed towards his current representations of the Himalaya in an abstract style.

Krishna Manandhar, c. 1987. Source: *A Journey through Forms and Colours. A Retrospective Painting Exhibition of Krishna Manandhar,* catalogue of an exhibition, 1987.

Extracts of Krishna Manandhar, personal communication with the author, February 2, 2015.

"Batsa Gopal´s sister, Urmila Vaidya, was the one who came up with the name SKIB-71, which is formed by the first initials of our names: Sashi, Kishna, Indra and Batsa."

"Our first exhibitions were inaugurated by Queen Ratna, but after King Mahendra passed away these events started to be promoted by the new Queen, Aiswarya, for her birthday celebrations."

“When I was selected to receive an Indian scholarship to study art, I did not know where to go. It was Rama Nanda Joshi the one who advised me to go to the Sir J.J. School of Art. There the education system was fully focused on practical skills, such as perspective or colour, and very little of art history.”

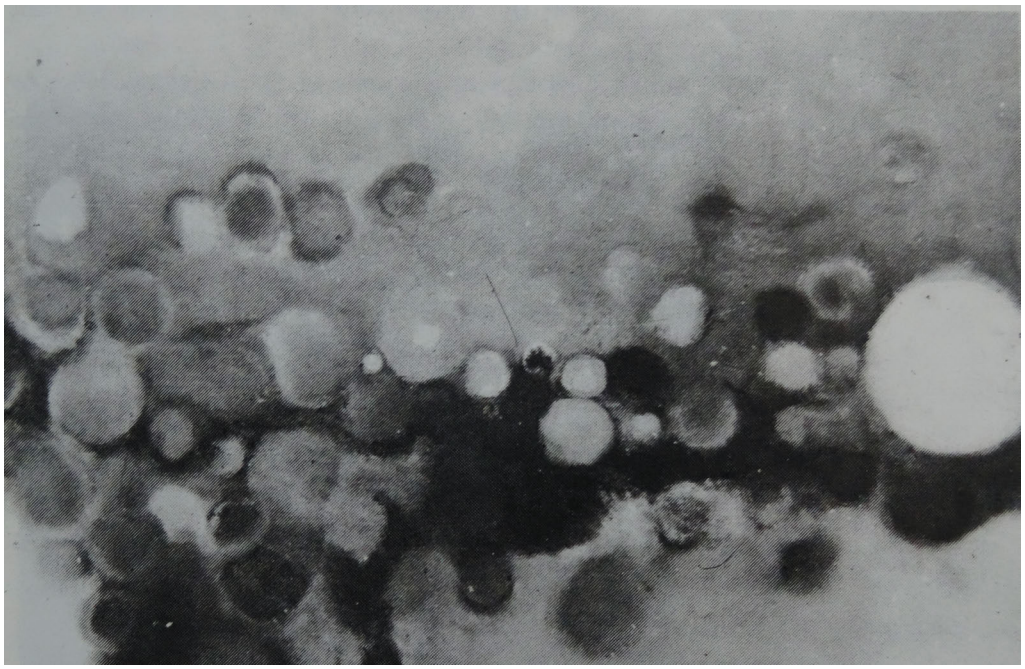
“One day there was a music programme organized at J.J., where the famous sitar played Rabi Shankar was invited. I was so impressed by his music that I decided to translate his tones into a visual melody. That is how I started painting abstract art.”

“Just after I came back from my studies at J.J. I had to join the Publicity Department of Information as a designer, where Gehendra Man Amatya was working, to make a living. In Mumbai my paintings were sold in good price, but in Nepal it was different.”

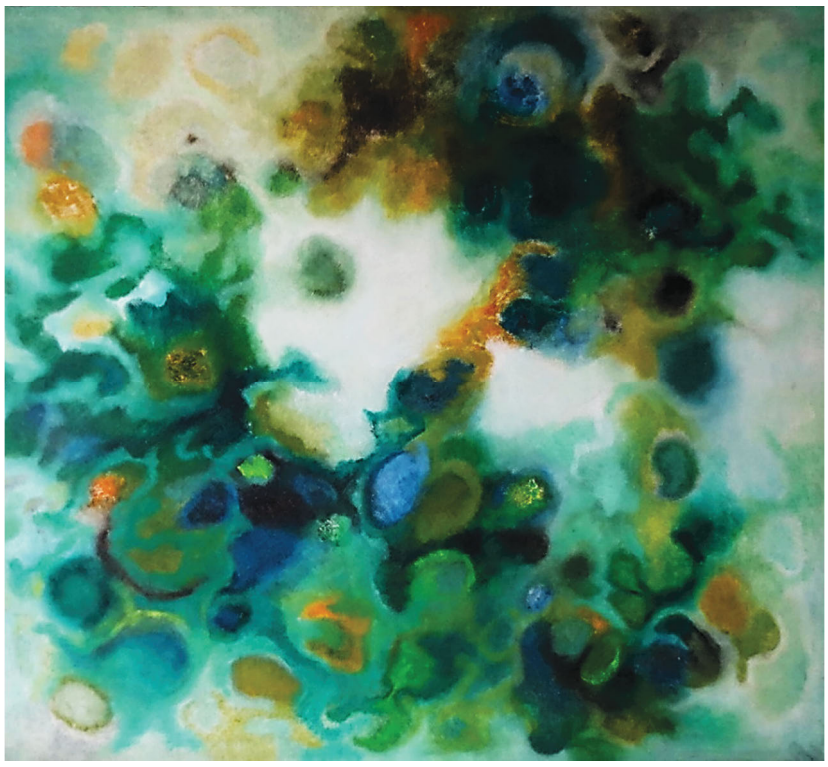
“The SKIB-71 art exhibitions were done with our own money. We used to gather once a year to organize these shows with our own means. To make a living we were teachers at Lalitkala Campus, and we used to join along with the Young Artist Group to drink raksi every afternoon. We also used to make cartoons like a factory. Sometimes in Sharad Ranjit´s house, sometimes in my own house.”

“Narayan Bahadur Singh was the art critic of our times. He was especially close to Indra Pradhan, as they used to teach in the same school in Western Nepal before Indra went to Mumbai. Narayan Bahadur Singh desired to write also critical things about the modern art scene in Nepal, but he said it was very risky.”

“At that time Lain Singh Bangdel was controlling the scene of modern art from the RNA. For this reason, the NAFA was transferred to the RNA. But even if SKIB-71 was not much connected with Bangdel, he appointed us as advisors of the new NAFA.”



Krishna Manandhar, "Composition," c. 1987. Source: *A Journey through Forms and Colours. A Retrospective Painting Exhibition of Krishna Manandhar,* catalogue of an exhibition, 1987.



Krishna Manandhar. Oil. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Krishna Manandhar, 2017. Oil. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Krishna Manandhar, 2017. Oil. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Maskey, Chandra Man Singh (1900-1984)

Belonging to a family of doctors, in 1925 Maskey was graduated in Fine Arts at the Government School of Art in Calcutta, where famous Indian painters such as Nandalal Bose and Abanindranath Tagore were his mentors. After that, he worked as a court artists for the Rana regime until his imprisonment in 1940, for his apparent collaboration in the restoration of King Tribhuvan´s power during those revolutionary times.

During the 1950s he founded the Nepal Arts Society, while becoming the main guru of many relevant artists in the years to come, such as Gehendra Man Amatya, Laxman Shrestha, Urmila Uphadayay Garg or Kiran Manandhar. Besides, he was appointed as curator of the Chhauni National Museum, director of the Archaeology Department, and even director of National Zoo. At the same time, he also participated in the most significant national and international art exhibitions at the service of the Panchayat.

Chandra Man Singh Maskey. Source: David K. Barker, "Maskey, Premier Artist of Nepal." *ISSUU* (2012): 9, accessed October 6, 2015. http://issuu.com/dkbbkk/docs/maskey

Extracts of his son Santosh Man Maskey, personal communication with the author, May 5, 2015.

"My father was a nationalist. He was fully aware of the traditional art of Nepal and wanted to give a message about this country to the people in Europe."

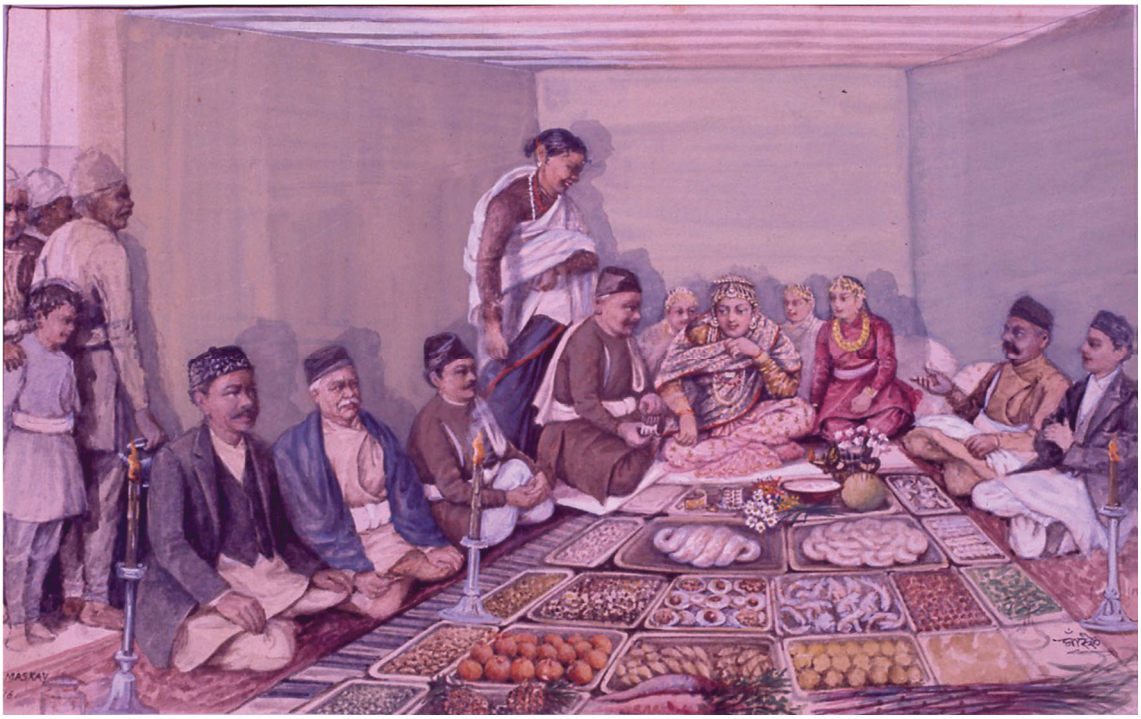
"Maskey was never interested in practicing traditional art. He said that this was the job of the *citrakār*, and my father belonged to a higher caste."

"During the Rana period, my father went to jail for three reasons. Firstly, he organized a clandestine school to teach students from different villages, without the Government's permission. Secondly, because he was accused of drawing a cartoon against the Rana regime. And thirdly, because he developed a too close relationship with King Tribhuvan, when he was commissioned by Juddha Shumshere to make his official portrait."

"During his days at the Durbar High School, my father used to sketch birds and houses. One day he copied a photograph of Chandra Shumshere Rana and his family. This is how the Prime Minister knew about his unusual skills and decided to grant him a scholarship to study at the Government School of Art in Calcutta."

Chandra Man Singh Maskey. Source: David K. Barker, "Maskey, Premier Artist of Nepal." *ISSUU* (2012): 9, accessed October 6, 2015. http://issuu.com/dkbbkk/docs/maskey_part_one

Chandra Man Singh Maskey. Source: David K. Barker, "Maskey, Premier Artist of Nepal." *ISSUU* (2012): 9, accessed October 6, 2015. http://issuu.com/dkbbkk/docs/maskey



Chandra Man Singh Maskey. Source: David K. Barker, "Maskey, Premier Artist of Nepal." *ISSUU* (2012): 9, accessed October 6, 2015. http://issuu.com/dkbbkk/docs/maskey

Chandra Man Singh Maskey. Source: David K. Barker, "Maskey, Premier Artist of Nepal." *ISSUU* (2012): 9, accessed October 6, 2015. http://issuu.com/dkbbkk/docs/maskey

Chandra Man Singh Maskey. Source: David K. Barker, "Maskey, Premier Artist of Nepal." *ISSUU* (2012): 9, accessed October 6, 2015. http://issuu.com/dkbbkk/docs/maskey

Mishra, Manuj Babhu (1936-2018)

Manuj Babhu Mishra. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Even if Manuj was accepted at the Sir J.J. School of Art, he decided to attend the University of Dacca in East Pakistan for his studies until 1968. Later in Kathmandu, Manuj would be employed as a graphic artists so as to design education materials for the Panchayat Government until 1978, when he was hired as a lecturer of Fine Arts at Tribhuvan University.

In 1988 Manuj founded the Hermitage Art Gallery, where this artist would recluse himself after the fall of the Panchayat "democracy" in 1990 as a form of protest. But in spite of his faithful attitude to the monarchs of Nepal, and his remarkable skills as a surreal artist, his paintings were never awarded at the *National Art Exhibitions* during the times of the regime.

Extracts of Manuj Babhu Mishtra, personal communication with the author, January 23, 2015.

"When I was a child my family passed away. I was left alone with two brothers and very little food to eat. I was starving, and it was from that moment when I started to make everything in the shadow. Where there is light, there must be shadow."

"Before heading to Dhaka, I was practicing drama in Kathmandu. I used to write many dramas, design backgrounds and also play them in Thamel and other parts of the city. When King Mahendra saw my art exhibition at the Shilpakala Academy in Bangladesh, organised by the Nepalese Embassy, he remembered me from my plays a the theatre of Singha Durbar, today disappeared because of a fire."

Manuj Babhu Mishra. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

"Max Mathews was my friend in Pakistan. She bought lots of my paintings."

"When the Peace Zone was proclaimed, my friends at the Royal Palace told me that I should not have done such violent paintings for the event. But this was not against the Peace Zone, but against the idea of peace all around the world. When King Birendra saw these paintings he smiled, but he did not appreciate them."

"The Royal Family never came to any of my art exhibitions, because I never invited them. I did it all by myself so, why should I invite them? They could have come, but maybe my exhibition repelled them."

"For me the Panchayat system was an excellent system, because it was a mixture between democracy and communism. But if you painted something against the Panchayat, you will have a hard life in this society."

"I appreciated Birendra as the best artist in the country. And Mahendra because he was a genious. But, why should I show my servility?"

"One day Sangeeta Thapa phoned me in order to request me a painting of Mona Lisa in a Nepalese style. Once I finished it I had this painting in my studio for two months, thus I started to love her as my wife, and paint more Mona Lisas. All of them got sold."

Manuj Babhu Mishra. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

"I do not think that abstract art is connected with the traditional culture of Nepal. It is a transformation, which means the acceptance of another culture into your culture."

"I think that Nepalese art has suffered many upside downs because of political changes. Historically, art always change because of politics. Since the end of the Malla period, the art of Nepal is in a process of decadence."

"Also tourist have not encouraged art in Nepal, but they have discouraged tradition. Because in order to sell and please the tourists, the Nepalese artists are just copying one from another."

Manuj Babu Mishra, 1983. Oil on canvas. Source: Photo courtesy of Roshan Mishra, 2017.

Manuj Babu Mishra. Oil on canvas. Source: Photo courtesy of Roshan Mishra, 2017.

Manuj Babu Mishra. Oil on canvas. Source: Photo courtesy of Roshan Mishra, 2017.

Manuj Babu Mishra, “Mona Lisa,” c. 2010. Oil on canvas. Source: Photo courtesy of Roshan Mishra, 2017.

Manuj Babu Mishra. Oil on canvas. Source: Photo courtesy of Roshan Mishra, 2017.

Manuj Babu Mishra. Oil on canvas. Source: Photo courtesy of Roshan Mishra, 2017.

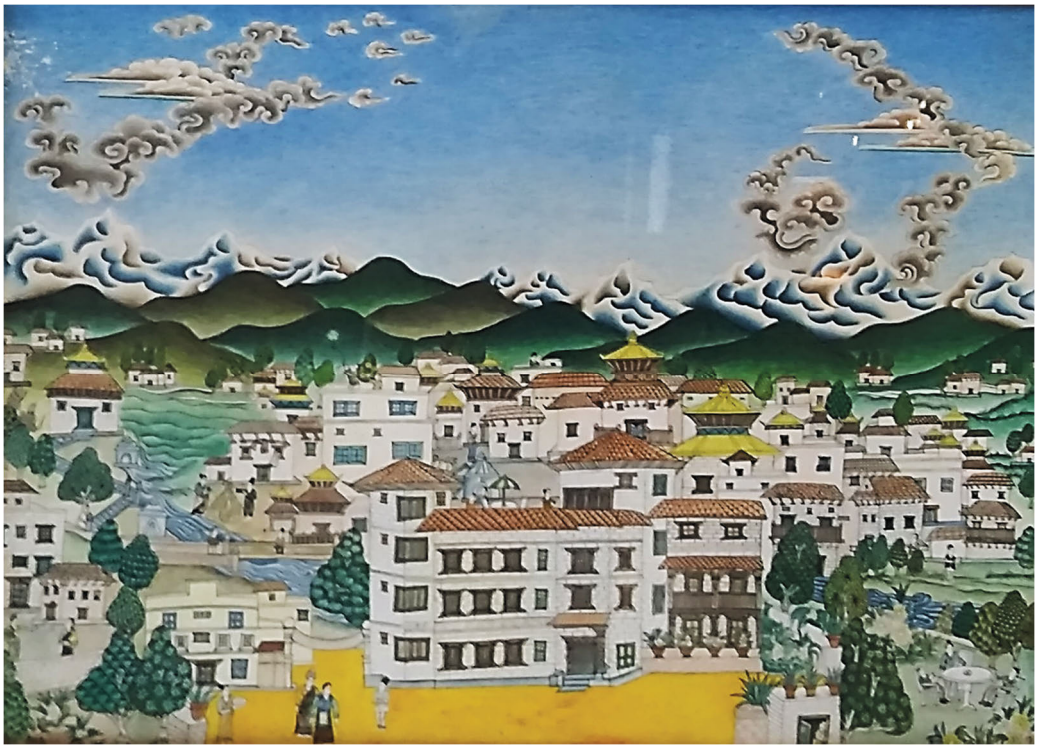
Moktan, Binod

A Nepalese-Tibetan traditional artist specialized in Thankga painting, Binod Moktan started to modernize his painting style in 1981, after he saw the paintings of Pasang and Gyalzen Sherpa, considered to be the forerunners of the "neo-thangka" style of painting. His original paintings were exhibited for the first time in Kathmandu in 1982, in an event curated by Desmond Doig. His success led him to exhibit the same series in West Germany during the same year, and later in 1990 at the October Gallery of Kathmandu, after which Binod left Nepal for a new job in the United States[454].

Binod Moktan, 1990. Acrylic. © Collection of Vajra Hotel. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017.

[454] Information retrieved from "Paintings With A Difference," *Sunday Despatch*, December 23, 1990.

Binod Moktan, 1990. Acrylic. © Collection of Vajra Hotel. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017



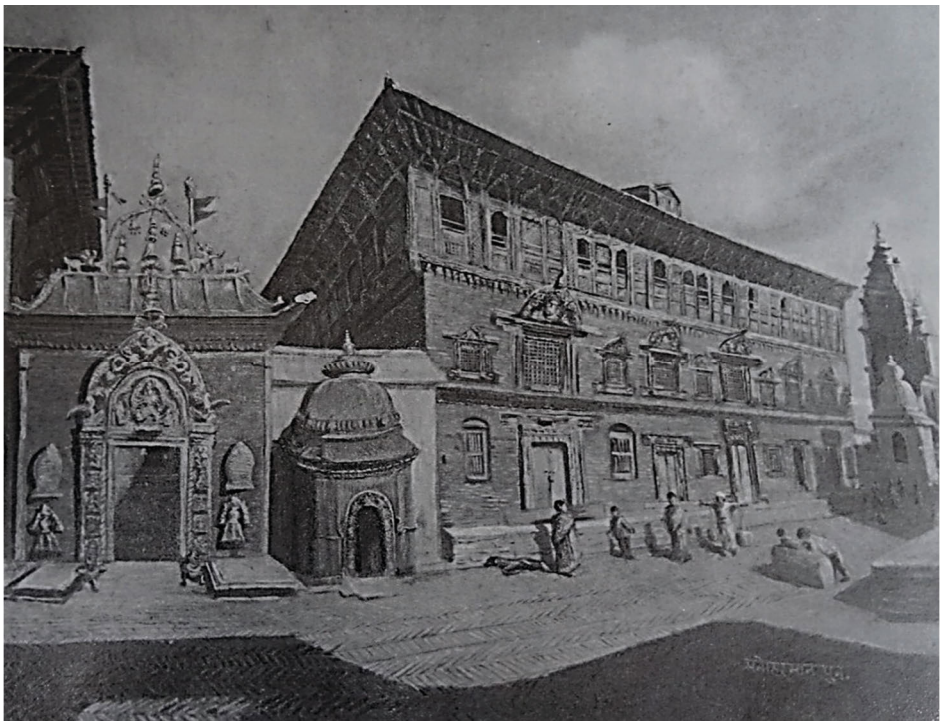
Binod Moktan, 1990. Acrylic. © Collection of Vajra Hotel. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2017

Poon, Manohar Man (1914-1990)

Born in a family of mural painters, he was inspired by his guru, Tej Bahadur Chitrakar. As an outstanding master in the style of "magic surrealism", Manohar Man Poon was rather isolated painter and cartoonist, who had been also employed as a signboard and poster painter in Delhi to make a living, when he was only seventeen years old. His paintings represent the monuments of a rich and complex culture, which is loosing its original character as a consequence of modern times. Besides, his later scenes breathe a sense of loneliness, possibly due to the premature death of his wife, Indra Shova, who really encouraged him to paint during their marriage times[455].

Manohar Man Poon, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2017.

[455] Information retrieved from Shailendra Kumar Singh, "Manohar Man Poon: A Living Institution."



Manohar Man Poon, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of Jagadish Chitrakar, 2017.

Manohar Man Poon, "*Matiyaa* procession," c. 1980. Oil. Source: Photo retrieved from *Arts of Asia* (14), 1984.

Pradhan, Indra (1944-1995)

Indra Pradhan, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of Indra Pradhan´s family, 2015

Graduated in drawing and painting, and a postgraduate in mural decoration at the Sir J.J. School of Art, Indra Pradhan was one of the members of the famous SKIB-71 group of artists while he made a living as an art teacher at Budhanilkantha School, in Kathmandu. During his creative career in Nepal, he held two solo art exhibitions. The first one in 1970 at NAFA, and the second later in 1989 at the J Art Gallery. Also, he was awarded with the first prize at the *National Art Exhibition* of 1977. It was his sad and premature death in 1995 what meant the end of the SKIB-71 artists group, after more than twenty years of collective work and modern art exhibitions in different parts of the Kingdom.

Indra Pradhan, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of Indra Pradhan´s family, 2015.

Indra Pradhan, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of Indra Pradhan´s family, 2015.

Indra Pradhan, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of Indra Pradhan´s family, 2015.

Ranjit, Ashmina (1966)

Nowadays a renowned performer artist and etcher, and daughter of the modern Nepalese painter Gopal Ranjit, Ashmina Ranjit was trained in visual arts at the Lalitkala Academy of Kathmandu by renown artists such as Manuj Babhu Mishra. In later stages of her career, did a special print-making course at the University of Tasmania with a scholarship from the Government of Australia, as well as her studies at the Columbia University in New York, where she fully developed her creative work towards the feminist issue in Nepal. After having participated in numerous national and international art exhibitions, she is nowadays curator at NEXUS art space where the most innovative forms of art are supported.

Within the SUTRA artists collective, the work of Ashmina Ranjit has to be particularly highlighted for pioneering the matter of women rights through her installations and performances. After completing her studies at the University of Tasmania in 1999, Ashmina´s early works with significant titles such as her show *Cultural Body*, celebrated at the Siddhartha Art Gallery in 2000[456].

Ashmina Ranjit, "Cultural Body," 2000. Source: ***Cultural Body***, (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2000), catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, February 17 through March 3, 2000.

[456] Inaugurated in 1988 by the curator Sangeetha Thapa, nowadays this Gallery is one of the main promoters of Nepalese art in Kathmandu.

Extracts of Ashmina Ranjit, personal communication with the author, March 5, 2015.

"In your performances you don't talk about yourself. You talk about the world that surrounds you. As a woman in this society my story is the story of all women, so *personal becomes political* in that context."

"I never thought I would become an artist. But I always wanted to fly high. I always thought I would be a pilot to be above the sky. As an artist, you can experience the process of creation as a meditation as well."

"My exhibition Women and Sensuality in 1999 caused a lot of controversion here. Also when I repeated this event in Tasmania the people stated that I could do this kind of bold work because I was coming from a tantric cultural background. I felt that nobody understood me."

Aranxa Cedillo, "Ashmina Ranjit, Broken Rules," Source: Pinterest, accessed July 7, 2018, https://www.pinterest.es/pin/540854236481506543/?lp=true

Sama, Bal Krishna (1903-1981)

Bal Krishna Sama. Source: Photo courtesy of Jeevan Sumshere Rana, 2015.

Balkrishna Shumsere Jang Bahadur Rana adopted the nick name *Sama,* or "equal" in Nepali, in 1948. Belonging to a family of court photographers, especially his grandfather Dambar Shumshere Rana, the figure of Sama is characterized by being a patriotic and multifaceted artist, master of modern literature, poetry, drama, design and visual arts in Nepal, while presenting his creations as social acts that fight for the democratic rights of the Nepalese society. Awarded with the first prize at the *Second National Art Exhibition*, he was also employed at the Gorkhapatra newspaper for a long time. Most of the modern artists of Nepal producing during the times of the Panchayat confess to have been promoted by Sama in one way or the other.

Extracts of his son Jeevan Shumshere Rana, personal communication with the author, May 26, 2015.

"Bal Krishna Sama knew the importance of Lain Singh Bangdel´s skills for Nepalese art, thus he was the one who adviced King Mahendra to bring Bangdel from London to Nepal. But he had also a very close relation with Gehendra Man Amatya and Laxman Shrestha, to whom he gave him a brush to encourage him to paint."

"Amar Chitrakar was helping Bal Krishna and also learning from him. But Bal Krishna Sama was not teach by anyone. He learned by his own self, with books."

“Bal Krishna Sama went to Russia two times. Once he painted Lenin´s portrait and gave it as a present through a big ceremony. Nevertheless, he was not officially communist. On the contrary, he was a democrat. He leaded the democratic revolt and he was also imprisoned. Many Ranas do not accept us today because we rejected to our surname.”

Bal Krishna Sama. © Collection of Jeevan Shumshere Rana. Source: Photo courtesy of Jeevan Sumshere Rana, 2015.

Bal Krishna Sama. Oil on canvass. © Collection of Narottam Das Shrestha. Source: Photo courtesy of Narottam Das Shrestha, 2015.

Shah, Shashi Bikram (1940)

Shashi Bikram Shah, 2015. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Part of the Royal family of the Shah monarchs of Nepal, in 1961 Shashi Shah was granted an Indian scholarship to study mural painting at Sir J.J. School of Arts, where he would gather along with other Nepalese students to form the SKIB-71 group of artists. After completing his degree in 1968, Shashi Shah organised his first retrospective at NAFA, and later in 1970 went back to New Delhi so as to specialize himself in graphic art at the Triveni Kala Sangam, and being awarded first prize at the *National Art Exhibition* celebrated in that year. Besides, from 1979 to 1989 he was appointed as Principal of the Lalitkala Campus in Kathmandu, and one of the leaders of the SKIB-71 and YAG political activities at the Sirjana Art Gallery.

Extracts of Shashi Bikram Shah, personal communication with the author, January 23, 2015.

"Mumbai was the gateway of the Western avant-garde styles in India. My horses are also inspired in Picasso´s horses, which is a symbol of the war."

"When I was studying in Mumbai, an English man named Alain Rivera collected many of my paintings. He used to bring me smoking pipes from London as a gift."

Shashi Bikram Shah. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Shashi Bikram Shah. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Shashi Bikram Shah. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Shashi Shah, “Kalki,” 2015. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Shashi Shah, 2015. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

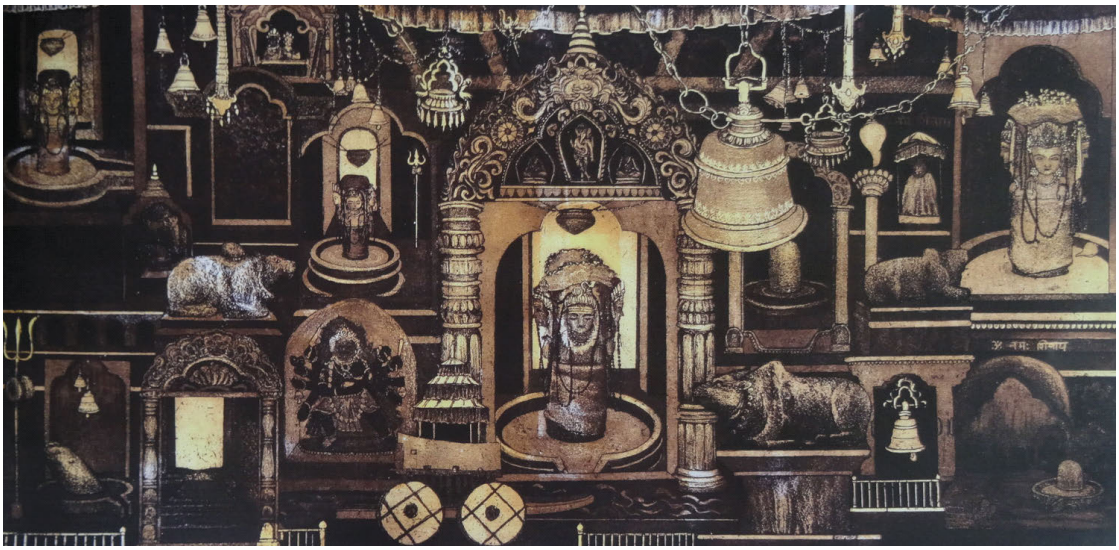
Shashi Shah, 2015. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Shashi Shah, 2015. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Shah, Uma Shankar (1965)

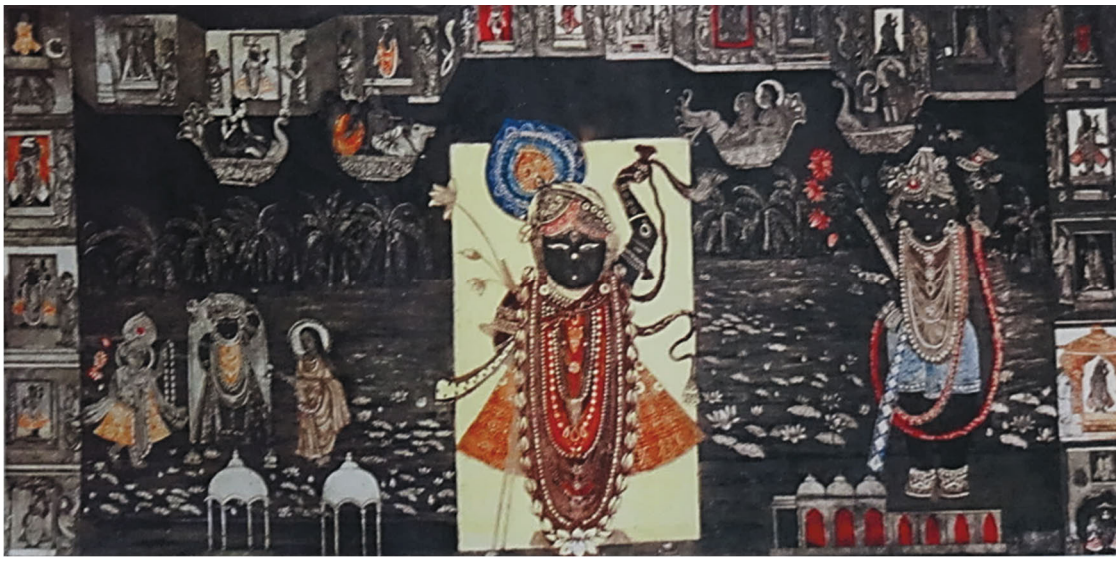
Graduated in printmaking at the BHU in 1991, Uma Shankar´s art work is characterized for being strongly inspired in the Mithila style practiced in his hometown, Janakpur, and also in the myths and fairy tales characteristic from this area. Nowadays a foremost Nepalese artist in the printmaking style, Uma has also lectured at Tribhuvan University´s Department of Fine Arts form many years.

Uma Shankar Shah, "Cosmic Union," 2013. Etching. Source: ***Uma & Seema. Expressions of Devotion,*** (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2013), Catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2013, 46.



Uma Shankar Shah, "Four faces of ***Paśupatināth***," 2013. Etching. Source: ***Uma & Seema. Expressions of Devotion,*** (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2013), Catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2013, 58.

Uma Shankar Shah, "Living Goddess" 2005. Etching. Source: *Uma & Seema. Expressions of Devotion,* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2013), Catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2013, 34.



Uma Shankar Shah,"*Shreenath*," 20135. Etching. Source: *Uma & Seema. Expressions of Devotion,* (Kathmandu: Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2013), Catalogue of an exhibition at the Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, 2013, 54.

Uma Shankar Shah, 2016. Source: "Nepalese artist Uma Shankar Shah´s first solo show in the city titled Roti-Beti," Visual Arts Gallery, accessed May 3, 2018, http://mattersofart.blogspot.com/2016/04/nepalese-artist-uma-shankar-shahs-first.html

Uma Shankar Shah, “Nepal Janakpur Jainagar Railway,” 2016. Acrylic on canvass. Source: Ians.in stories, accessed 5 May, 2018, http://ians.in/stories/2016/Apr/22/News_C-1-781430.html

Sharma, Hari Prashad (1937)

Trained by Amar Chitrakar and the Juddha Kala Pathsala in the techniques of realistic art, Hari Prasad is nowadays a rather isolated artists and master in the "magic surrealism" movement. His oil and watercolours, presenting "a blend of art and culture", were exhibited for the first time at NAFA in 1972. But in spite of his skills, his paintings have been part of very few art exhibitions in the country, and never awarded any prize at the *National Art Exhibitions*.

Hari Prasad Sharma, "Source: "History on canvass," *Nepali Times*, October 8, 2015, accessed April 3, 2017, http://archive.nepalitimes.com/article/Nepali-Times-Buzz/Hari-Prasad-Sharma-painting-exhibition,2619

Hari Prasad Sharma, "Source: "History on canvass," Nepali Times, October 8, 2015, accessed April 3, 2017, http://archive.nepalitimes.com/article/Nepali-Times-Buzz/Hari-Prasad-Sharma-painting-exhibition,2619

Hari Prasad Sharma, "Araniko leaving for Tibet." Source: Fineartamerica, accessed 28 April, 2016, https://fineartamerica.com/featured/boudha-stupa-hari-prasad-sharma.html

Shrestha, Laxman (1939)

Belonging to an aristocratic family from Siraha, Nepal, Laxman Shreshtha is nowadays a renowned artist in the contemporary art circles of Mumbai. He was educated at the Sir J.J. School of Art, L'École Nationale Superieure des Beaux Arts in Paris, and the Central School of Art in London. Besides, he also studied at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere. Since the 1960s Shrestha has held numerous solo exhibitions of his works, and recipient of many awards and fellowships. His spiritual and large-scape abstract works, greatly inspired by the mountain peaks of his native home Nepal, exhibited in few occasions in Kathmandu, are nowadays icons of the movement of modern art in Nepal in the international scene.

Extracts of Laxman Shrestha, personal communication with the author by phone, May 27, 2015.

"I decided to go to the J.J. School of Art because at that time that was the best University for learning the new styles. There I shared my room with Rama Nanda Joshi in a student´s hostel for two years."

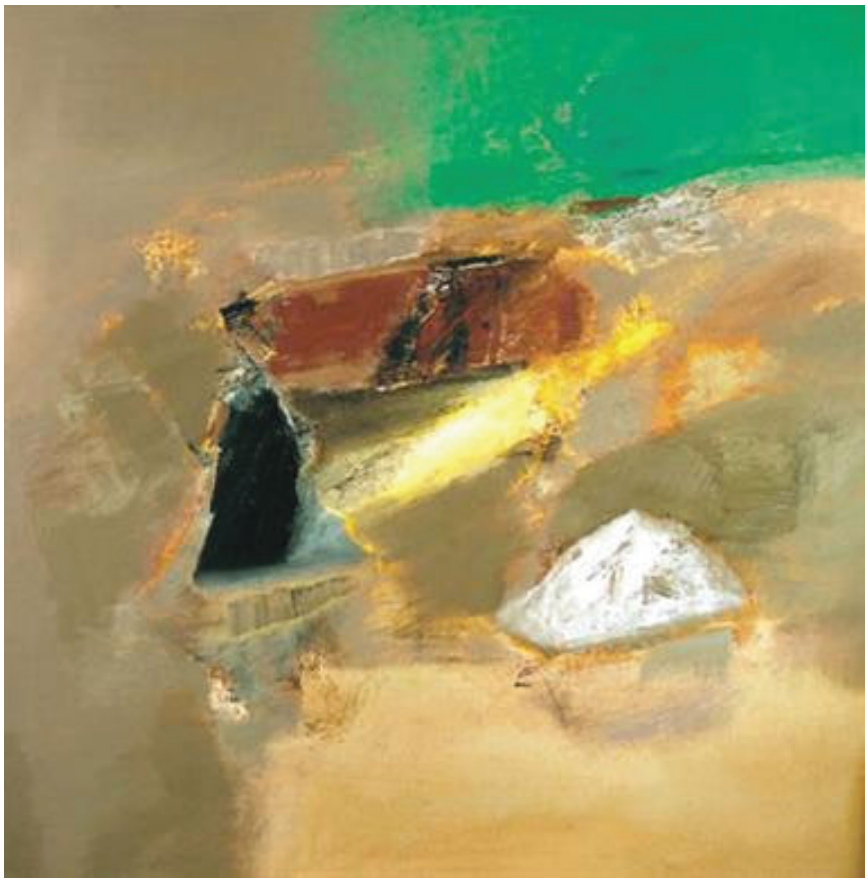
"During my last year in Mumbai, in 1963, I held and exhibition of my paintings in Patan Hotel. In those times King Mahendra, who visited my show, asked me to come back to Nepal and work there as his guest. Nevertheless, soon after I arrived in Kathmandu I got a French Government Scholarship."

"I did not intend to stay in Kathmandu, because I could not have survived there as an artist. Most of the modern artists of Nepal had a house or lands, but I didn't."

Laxman Shrestha, “Untlited.” Source: Saffronart, accessed 1 October, 2017, http://www.saffronart.com/auctions/PostWork.aspx?l=9329

Laxman Shrestha, “Untlited,” 2002. Oil on canvas. Source: Saffronart, accessed 1 October, 2017, http://www.saffronart.com/auctions/PostWork.aspx?l=9329

Laxman Shrestha, “Untlited,” 2002. Oil on canvas. Source: Saffronart, accessed 1 October, 2017, http://www.saffronart.com/auctions/PostWork.aspx?l=9329



Laxman Shrestha, “Untlited,” 1998. Oil on canvas. Source: Saffronart, accessed 1 October, 2017, http://www.saffronart.com/auctions/PostWork.aspx?l=9329

Laxman Shrestha, “Untlited,” 2002. Oil on canvas. Source: Saffronart, accessed 1 October, 2017, http://www.saffronart.com/auctions/PostWork.aspx?l=9329

Singh, Birendra Prataph (1956)

Birendra Prataph Singh, "Creation," c. 1980. Etching. Source: Photo courtesy of Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2015.

Within the current creative scene of the Kathmandu Valley, Birendra Prataph is a remarkable drawer and etcher whose ironical artworks inspire the creations of the future generations to come. While being trained in painting at the BHU, he joined with the Junkiree group of artists from Nepal, along with he started to exhibit his print makings in India. His first solo art exhibition in Kathmandu, *Transmutation*, took place at the Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra in 1977. In 1980 he attended a course in Graphic Printmaking at the Lalitkala Academy in New Delhi, where he learnt this technique with the famous Indian artist Deepak Banerjee. Once back in Kathmandu, he started working as a illustrator for the Gorkhapatra newspaper, and also inaugurated the Sirjana Art Gallery along with some of the members of SKIB-71 and Young Artist Group.

Extracts of Birendra Prataph Singh, personal communication with the author, February 2, 2015.

"I belong to the Royalty of Western Nepal. When I was a child, I was studying in an army school in Bangladesh, by then East Pakistan. My father was a very important man, so we used to be invited to every art exhibition organised in those times."

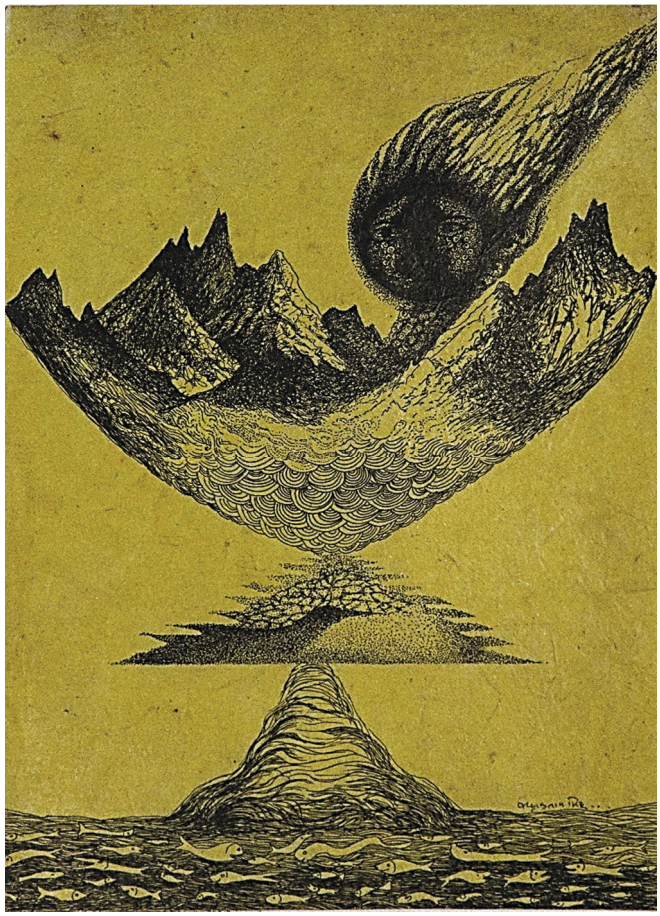
"I went to study art at BHU because my aunt was living near Varanasi. I got a scholarship from the University, where I learnt art from all over the world and you were free to experiment from the very beginning. Sometimes they used to teach us outside also."

“Rama Nanda Joshi was my guru for three months. He was a very good watercolour landscapist and a very good teacher.”

“My teacher, Deepak Banerjee, recommended me as a potential student in Śantiniketan during my last year. I joined there only for a week, as an external student, because I did not like it. So I left voluntarily.”

“Picasso changed a lot his style many times. That is what I appreciate of him. Artists must change, develop. That is why I am always working for the environment, but in different ways.”

“Somehow I follow the surrealism and Dadaism. My main technique is “pure sight automatism”. Whatever comes to my mind, I paint it freely.”



Birendra Prataph Singh, “Creation,” c. 1980. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2015.

Birendra Prataph Singh, “Soul,” c. 1976. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2015.

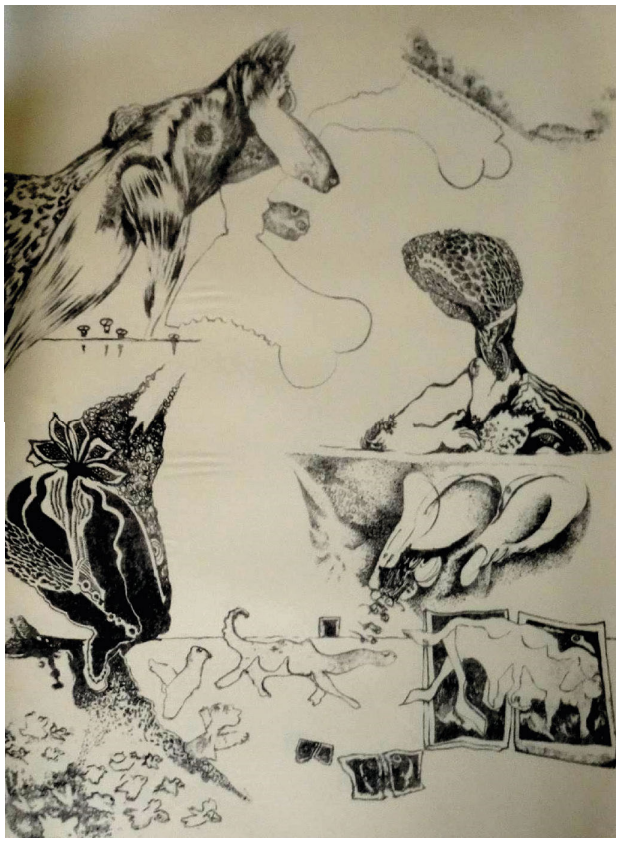
Birendra Prataph Singh, “Soul,” c. 1976. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2015.

Birendra Prataph Singh, “Soul,” c. 1976. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2015.

Birendra Prataph Singh, c. 1980. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Birendra Prataph Singh, c. 1970. Etching. Source: Photo courtesy of Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2015.

Birendra Prataph Singh, 1980. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.



Birendra Prataph Singh, 1980. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

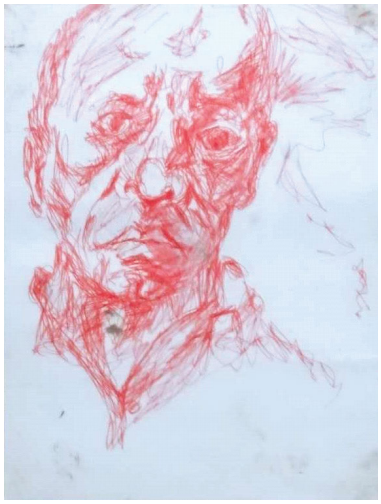
Birendra Prataph Singh, c. 1980. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Birendra Prataph Singh, 1980. Drawing. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Birendra Prataph Singh, 2012. Drawing. © Collection of Pratima Pandé. Source: Photo courtesy of Siddhartha Art Gallery, 2015.

Subba, Virendra (1927-2016)

Born in Darjeeling, Virendra was a patriotic abstract painter and poet, member of the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan. Admirer of the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, he got the opportunity to study at *Śāntiniketan* thanks to his friend, the Indonesian abstract painter Affandi (1903-1990). His early poems were published in most of the Nepali magazines from India, such as his collection ***Ekanta***, or "seclusion", published in 1947, or later ***Meghamala***, or "The garland of clouds", in 1963. Nowadays a forgotten artists in the contemporary art circles of Nepal, Virendra was one of those painters from *Gorkhārajya* chosen by King Mahendra to represent the modern art movement in Nepal, presenting his works several times in Kathmandu and Delhi, until his last exhibition at NAFA in 1970.

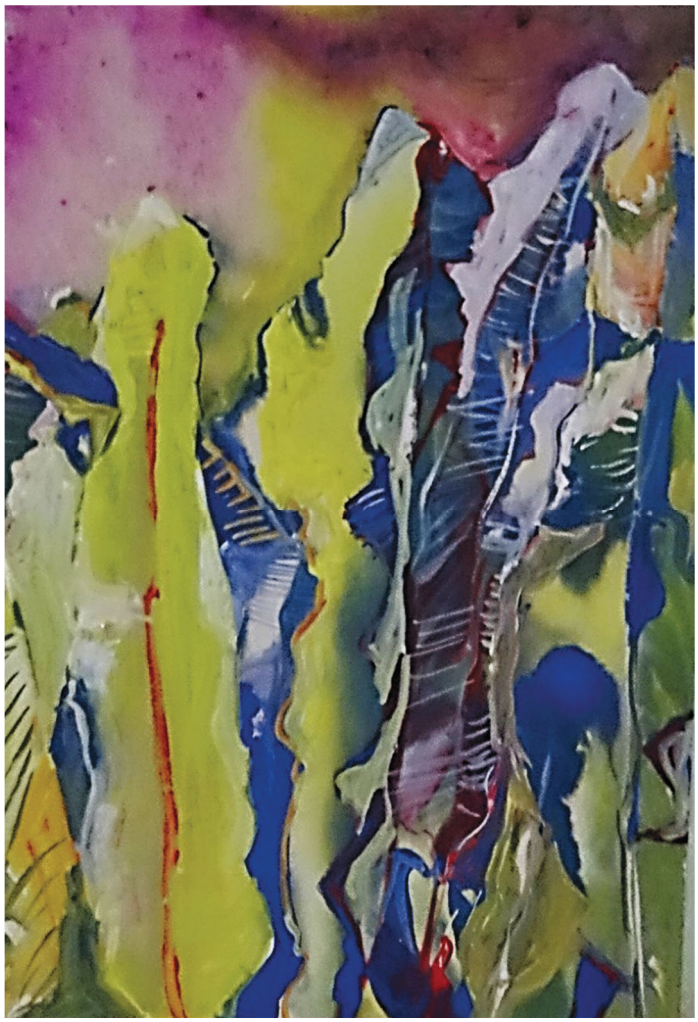


Virendra Subba, c. 1970. Watercolour on paper. © Collection of the Communist Centre, Darjeeling. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2016.

Virendra Subba, c. 1970. Watercolour on paper. © Collection of the Communist Centre, Darjeeling. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2016.

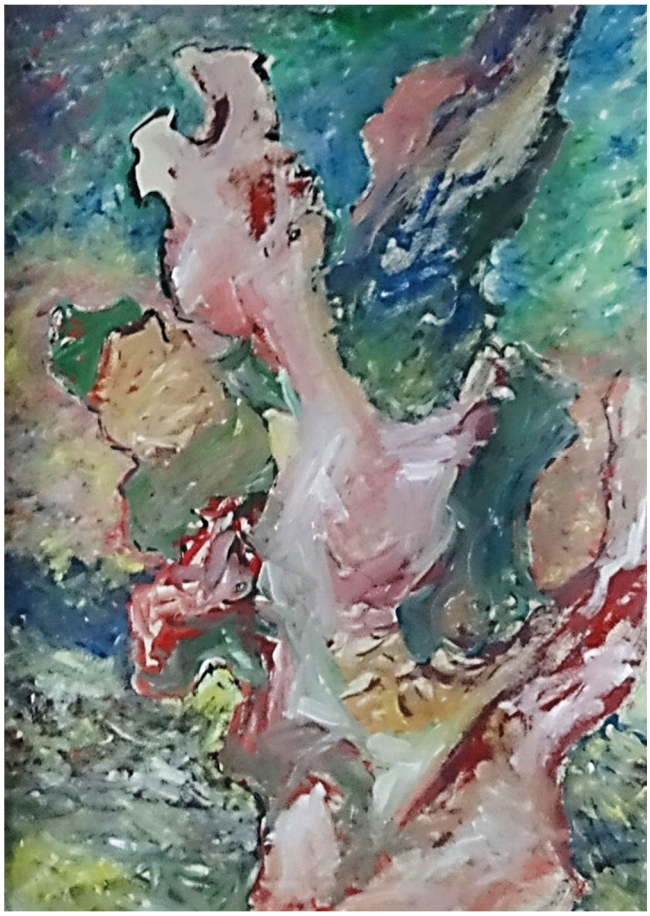
Virendra Subba, c. 1970. Watercolour on paper. © Collection of the Communist Centre, Darjeeling. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2016.

Virendra Subba, c. 1970. Watercolour on paper. © Collection of the Communist Centre, Darjeeling. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2016.



Virendra Subba, c. 1970. Watercolour on paper. © Collection of the Communist Centre, Darjeeling. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2016.

Virendra Subba, c. 1970. Watercolour on paper. © Collection of the Communist Centre, Darjeeling. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2016.



Virendra Subba, c. 1970. Watercolour on paper. © Collection of the Communist Centre, Darjeeling. Source: Photo courtesy of the author, 2016.

Thapa, Vijay (1943)

One of the experimental abstract artists of Nepal in the 1950s, in 1962 young Thapa was selected to be the personal art teacher of Prince Birendra. Later, in 1965, he got the opportunity to study at the BHU thanks to an Indian Government Scholarship, while becoming the first Nepalese artist to receive fine arts training at this institution. After coming back to Nepal in 1970, he was awarded with the first prize at *the International Art Exhibition*, NAFA.

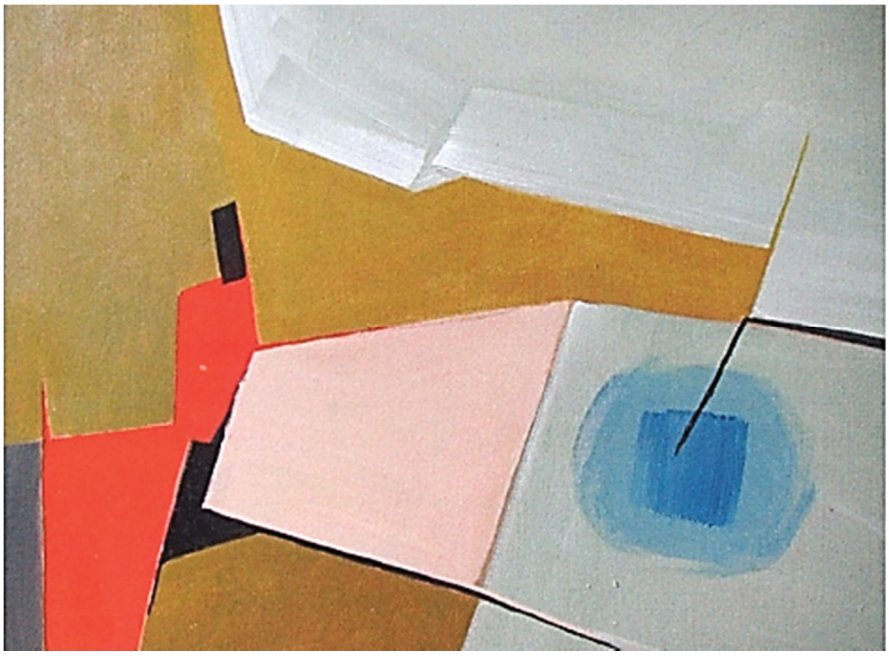
Vijay Thapa, c. 1970. Oil. © Collection of Vijay Thapa. Source: *Journey 16. Paintings by Vijay Thapa,* catalogue of an exhibition, 2008

Extracts of Vijay Thapa, personal communication with the author, May 5, 2015.

"When I exhibited my paintings here in 1962, I also got the opportunity to become the art teacher of Prince Birendra. I teached him wash painting and he did many art works, but only a few were published. The Prince used to say that human life is like a pearl, as when disturbances come to us we must reflect back those disturbances. After that, I got an Indian scholarship and went to BHU so as to carry on with my studies."

"In the modern art exhibitions of those days, either solo or collective, the first day a Minister or member of the Royal Family would inaugurate the event and many people would come. But from the second day, barely a person would come. Modern art did not connect with Nepalese people."

"I really like Paul Gauguin. For me abstract art is a person´s innermost identity. I use lots of grey colour because it matches with all the colours. It is not a very clear colour. Besides, I do not plan my compositions, they just come spontaneously."



Vijay Thapa, c. 1970. Oil. © Collection of Vijay Thapa. Source: ***Journey 16. Paintings by Vijay Thapa,*** catalogue of an exhibition, 2008.

Vijay Thapa, c. 1970. Oil. © Collection of Vijay Thapa. Source: ***Journey 16. Paintings by Vijay Thapa,*** catalogue of an exhibition, 2008.

Tiwari, Shashikala (1950)

Born in a traditional family of architects and doctors, Shashikala Tiwari learnt modern art with Chandra Man Singh Maskey, graduated in Tribhuvan University, and in 1970 a Master in Fine Arts at the University of Baroda. Her first solo exhibition was inaugurated by Queen Ratna at NAFA, in 1973. Since then, Shashikala has participated in a considerable number of national and international art exhibitions, highlighting the one organised by October Gallery in Germany and London in 1981.

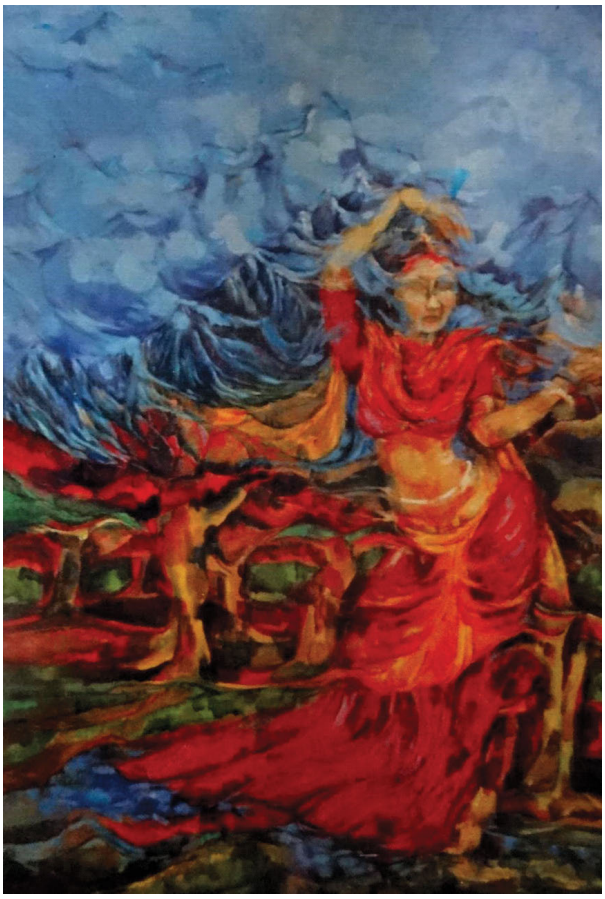
Shashikala Tiwari, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Extracts of Sashikala Tiwari, personal communication with the author, April 4, 2015.

"King Birendra was also an artist. He used to come and see my artworks by surprise. When this happened, some had to call me fast."

"I can´t paint without nature. I has to be somewhere nearby. I need to have also the mountains in sight. Thus everything I do, birds, flowers, look like mountains."

"I did not know about Georgia O´Keefe until Lain Singh Bangdel told me about her. She inspired my series of flowers. But my work is not feminist, is feminine."



Shashikala Tiwari, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

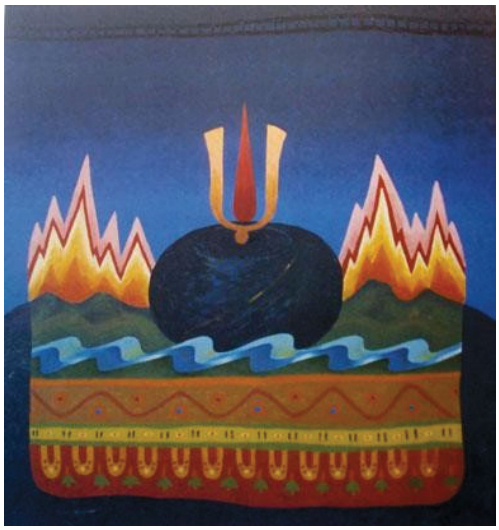
Shashikala Tiwari, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Shashikala Tiwari, c. 2012. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Shashikala Tiwari, c. 2012. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Shashikala Tiwari, c. 1980. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Vaidya, Batsa Gopal (1945)



Batsa Gopal Vaidya, "Creation," 1988. Source: Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, accessed June 18, 2018, http://faam.city.fukuoka.lg.jp/cgi-bin/eng/exhibition/exhibition.cgi?eid=10249

Mr. Vaidya belongs to a *newār* family of ayurvedic doctors, for which reason he was fully aware of the tantric symbols since he was a child. Pioneer in the "neo-tantric" creative movement of Nepal, Batsa developed this idea when studying at the Sir J.J. School of Art, thanks to an Indian scholarship, and where he did a special course on print making. Back in Nepal in 1970, Batsa Gopal organised his first retrospective of "neo-tantric" etchings at NAFA, being a year later awarded first prize at the *National Art Exhibition* for his original works. I would be during this year when Batsa Gopal joined along with other Nepalese artists to inaugurate the famous SKIB-71 artists group, along with whom he would develop and exhibit his creative works for the rest of his career.

Extracts of Batsa Gopal Vaida, personal communication with the author, January 22, 2015.

"The SKIB-71 group had the vision to connect all cultural arts. Like fine arts, literature, music, dance, theatre….that is why during our inaugurations we should call artists from all the backgrounds. We did not want to do traditional art, we wanted to create freely, but we were concerned about the cultural heritage of our country."

"During the Panchayat times art was not bounded by politics. We could express ourselves freely without being affected by the system."

"In the Lalitkala Campus the teaching system was "traditional". They teached how to paint standstills, landscapes, portraits and so on. But in Sir J.J. School of Art the education was free. Nobody told us what to do."

Basta Gopal Vaidya, c. 1990. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Basta Gopal Vaidya, c. 1990. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Basta Gopal Vaidya, c. 1990. Source: Photo courtesy of the artist, 2015.

Classification of the modern artists of Nepal according to their creative styles (1950-1990)[1]

	Picturesque art	Abstract mountains	"Magic-surrealism"	"Neo-traditional" art	Ironical art
1950-1962	Amar Chitrakar Bal Krishna Sama Ananda Muni Shakya Tej Bahadur Chitrakar	Vijay Thapa	Chandra Man Singh Maskey Keshava Duvadi Hari Prasad Sharma Uttam Nepali	Urmila Upadhayay Garg	Gehendra Man Amatya
1962-1975	Dil Bahadur Chitrakar Rama Nanda Joshi	K.K. Karmacharya Krishna Manandhar Lain Singh Bangdel Laxman Shreshta		Batsa Gopal Vaidya Thakur Prasad Mainali Pramila Giri	Durga Baral Indra Pradhan Manuj Babhu Mishtra Shashi Bikram Shah Virendra Subba
1975-1990		Kiran Manandhar Shashikala Tiwari Surendra Raj Bhattarai	Jagadish Chitrakar Ram Kumar Baukhajee Manohar Man Poon	Asha Dangol Binod Moktan Lok Chitrakar Ragini Upadayaya Grela Saurganga Darshandari Uma Shankar Shah	Ashmina Ranjit Bipin Guimirey Birendra Prataph Singh Kul Man Singh Bandhari Sujan Chitrakar

[1] This chart presents just a general overview of the styles that were more characteristic of each artist. However, it is not a fixed idea as many of these artists may be also characterized with more than one style.

Annex 2

Chronology

Jan. Nicolai Michoutouchkine exhibition, Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra.

Feb. Gehendra Man Amatya exhibition, Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra

Royal Nepal Accademy (RNA) is founded

Virendra Subba exhibition. RNA

1956 | **1957** | **1958** | **1959** | **1960**

Nov. *National Development Art Exhibition.* World Buddhist Conference in Kathmandu.

Nov, 17. Gehendra Man Amatya, *200 days painting exhibition*. Asan Tilanga Bhawan.

Urmila Upadayay Garg exhibition. Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra

Sept 15. *Exhibition of Contemporary Artists of Nepal*. American Library

Uttam Nepali exhibition. Saraswoti Sadan

Aug. 26. Nepalese Arts & Crafts exhibition. Azad Bhavan, New Delhi

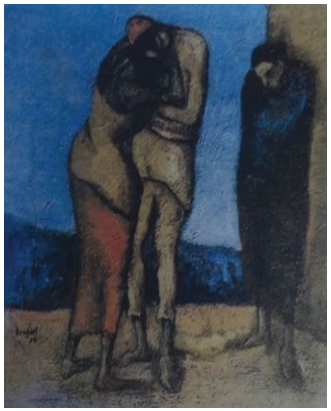
Aug. 29. Contemporary Nepalese Paintings and Handicrafts exhibition. International Centre, New Delhi

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FINE ARTS (NAFA)

Jan 16. National Association of Fine Arts (NAFA) is founded.
Dic. 29. 1º National Art Exhibition. 1º Price: Durga Baral. Birendra Gold Medal: Lain Singh Bangdel.

1961	1962	1963	1964	1965

Apr-May. Lain Singh Bangdel exhibition. Saraswoti Sadan



Apr. 22. Nepal Art Council (NAC) is inaugurated.

Art of Nepal exhibition. United States

Feb. Virendra Subba exhibition, New Delhi.

1966

Jan. 7-14. Uttam Nepali exhibition, NAFA.

Feb. Gehendra Man Amatya exhibition, NAFA

Mar. 22. Gehendra Man Amatya exhibition, Chicago.

Apr. 15. Gehendra Man Amatya exhibition. Calcutta.

Nepalese Art exhibition, Paris

May 2. Laxman Shrestha awarded in International Painting Exhibition, Paris.

Nov. 20. 2º National Art Exhibition. 1º Price Dil Bahadur Chitrakar.Birendra Gold Medal: Sama.

1967

Jan. 20. Tej Bahadur Chitrakar exhibition, NAFA.

Feb. 17-24. Manuj Babhu Mishtra exhibition, Pakistan Arts Council, Dacca.

May. 10. Nepalese artists exhibition, NAC.

May 28-30. J.J. School of Arts students and teachers exhibition. NAFA

Sept. 13. Laxman Shrestha exhibition, NAFA.

Dic. 9-15. B. R. Gujar exhibition from Bombay, Royal Hotel.

Dic 21. Max Gallery is founded

Dic. 22. 3º National Art Exhibition.1º Price: Laxman Shrestha

1968

MAX GALLERY
Jan. 25-4. Uttam Nepali exhibition.
Feb. 15. Gehendra Man Amatya exhibition.
Mar. 13. Contemporary Russian Paintings.
May. 6-13. Children´s Art Exhibition.
May 28-5. French Art Reproductions
Aug.18. Indian Bhatiks exhibition.
Sept. 3. Anthony Marciano (Kenya) exhibition.
Oct. 3-21. Dil Bahadur Chitrakar exhibition
4-16. Nov- Deepak Shimkhada exhibition.

Apr. 8. Manuj Babhu Mishtra exhibition, Dacca.

Jun. 18. Shashi Shah exhibition, NAFA

Dic. 29. 4º National Art Exhibition. 1º Price: Pramila Giri.

1969

Feb 17-24. Manuj Bbahu Mishra exhibition, NAFA.

Aug. 1. Laxman Shrestha exhibition, NAFA.

PRITHVI ART GALLERY

Jan 10. Prithvi Art Gallery is founded
Abr. 22-2. Uttam Nepali exhibition.
Aug. 25. Urmila Upadayay Garg exhibition.

Dic. 25. 5º National Art Exhibition. 1º Price traditional: Siddi Muni Shakya. 1º Price contemporary: Jyapu.

1970

Apr 25. *Korean Paintings and Graphics exhibition*, NAFA.

Jul 10-15. Paul A. Lingren exhibition, American Cultural Centre

Oct 24-30. Otto Eglau, German etching exhibition. NAFA.

Jun. 7. International Art Exhibition NAFA. 1º price Vijay Thapa

Dic. 2-8. Batsa Gopal Vaidya exhibition, NAFA

Dic. 29. 6º National Art Exhibition. 1º Price Shashi Shah

Jan. Indra Pradhan exhibition *Vision-71*, NAFA.

Apr. 3-10. Vijay Thapa, Manuj Babhu Mishtra and Shashi Shah exhibition, NAFA.

Aug. 20. SKIB-71 exhibition, NAFA.

Feb. 13. Dil Bahadur Chitrakar exhibition Araniko Art Gallery.

Jun. 16. Hari Prasad Sharma exhibition. NAFA.

PARK GALLERY

Dic 28. 1972, Landscape Paintings exhibition.
May. 3-10, 1973. Kiran Manandhar exhibition.
Nov. 17. 1973. Batik exhibition.
Nov. 6-10. 1974. SKIB-71 exhibition.

Jun. 20. Lalitkala Campus students exhibition.

Jul. 27-5. Manohar Man Poon exhibition. NAFA

Feb. 24. National Development Exhibition. Coronation Day

Apr. 20. Chandra Man Singh Maskey exhibition. RNA

Jun. 9-14. Kiran Manandhar exhibition. Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra

Sept. Uttam Nepali exhibition. "Poetry and Painting", NAFA

1971	1972	1973	1974	1975

Nov. 23-3. K. K. Karmacharya. Painting & collage exhibition, NAFA

Dic. 9. Dil Bahadur Chitrakar, *Paintings of Nepal* exhibition, Arniko Art Gallery.

Dic. 29. 7º National Art Exhibition. 1º Price: Krishna Manandhar.

Oct. 26. Vijay Thapa exhibition, Prithvi Narayan College, Pokhara

Dic. 29. 8º National Art Exhibition. 1º Price: Batsa Gopal Vaidya

Nov. 6-11. SKIB-71 exhibition. Open Air Theatre. Pokhara

Dic. 29. 9º National Art Exhibition. 1º Price: Thakur Prasad Mainali

Dic. 28-1. Contemporary Nepalese Paintings and Sculptures, Shridharani Art Gallery. New Delhi.

Dic. 29. 10º National Art Exhibition. 1º Price & Birendra Gold Medal Thakur Prasad Mainali

Nov. 7. SKIB-71 exhibition. RNA.

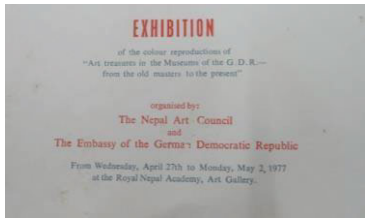
Nov. 7-14. Vijay Thapa exhibition NAFA

Feb. 23-25. Kiran Manandhar exhibition. International House BHU. Vanarasi

Jul. 11. 1º Gai Jatra exhibition

Jul. 18. NAFA art exhibition, URSS

Apr. 27-1. Colour reproductions exhibition from Germany. NAC.



Jul. 30. 2º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

Sept. 8. Urmila Uphadaday Garg exhibition. Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra

Jul. 20. 3º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

Jun. 10. 4º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

Jul. 21-24. Ragini Upadayay Grela exhibition.

Jul. 28. Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980

Aug. 8. Chandra Man Singh Maskey exhibition. The Kirghiz State Art Museum

Nov. 7-9. SKIB-71 exhibition. RNA.

Oct. 27-4. Madan Chitrakar exhibition. Nepal-Bharat Sankritik Kendra

Nov. 8. SKIB-71 exhibition

Dic. 31. 13º National Art Exhibition. Birendra Gold Medal: Batsa Gopal Vaidya.

Nov. 8-15. SKIB-71 exhibition. NAFA.

1981

Aug. 17. 6º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

Sep. 13-17. Bipin Gimirey exhibition.

Nov. 7-16. SKIB-71 exhibition. NAFA

Dic. 16. Manuj Babhu Mishtra, *Peace Zone* exhibition.

Dic. 29. *Dreams and Development* exhibition. NAFA (RNA)

1982

Jan. 17-20. Mazzanine artist group exhibition. Palpasa Art Gallery

Feb. 18. Jyoti Dubadi exhibition "Art Books". Honnold Library, Claremont, California.

May. 1-6. German artists exhibition. RNA.

May. 21-26. Pramila Giri, *Meditation and Reflections* exhibition, City Hall.

Jun. 1-3. Mukesh Malla exhibition. Moti Memorial building. Dharan

Jun 24-8. Durga Baral exhibition *Chowk Ra Tamasuk.* Nepal-Bharat Sankritik Kendra.

Aug. 6. 7º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

Nov. 1-14. SKIB-71 exhibition. NAFA.

1983

Jul. 31-8. *Korean Art Exhibition*. NAFA

Aug. 25. 8º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA.

Nov. 7. Women´s Art Exhibition. Trichandra Campus.1º Price: Shashikala Tiwari

Nov. 25. Nepal Study group. Portraits exhibition, Saraswoti Sadan

Dic. 29. 19º National Art Exhibition. NAFA (RNA). 1º Price Kiran Manandhar

1984

Jan. 2. Young Artist Group *Jomsom & Muktinah* exhibition, Palpasa Art Gallery

May. 14. Shashikala Tiwari, *Footmarks of Peace* exhibition, NAFA (RNA)

May. 24-5. Young Artist Group exhibition. NAFA. 1º Price: Surendra Raj Bhattarai

Jun. 10-16. Young Artists Group and senior artists exhibition. NAFA. 1º prize: Yogendra Dangol

Aug. 13. 9º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

Aug. 22-24. Religious painting exhibition. Park Gallery

Nov. 7. SKIB-71 exhibition. NAFA (RNA)

1985

Feb. 8-9. *Peace Zone* exhibition. Pokhara

Apr. 3-10. Indian Art Exhibition. Bhrikuti Mandap.

May. 14-16. Nepal Fine Arts Accademy Foundation Comitee exhibition (modern and traditional art) Rottary Club

May. 29. Shashikala Tiwari, Mahomar Man Poon and Jagadish Chitrakar exhibition. October Art Gallery, UK.

Aug. 4-16. V. Sovolev photographs exhibition. Soviet Cultural House.

Aug. 23. Chandra Man Singh Maskey exhibition. NAFA (RNA)

Sept. 1. 10º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

Sept. 25. *Nepalese Women in the International Decade* exhibition, NAFA (RNA)

Mar. 15. *Spring Leaves* group exhibition of paintings and sculptures. Cool´s House.

Aug. 21. 11º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

Sept. 21. Chinese handicrafts exhibition, NAFA (RNA)

Feb. 4. *Contemporary Art of Nepal* exhibition. Goethe Institute.

Aug. 11. 12º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

Oct. 12. Winfired Wolk etching exhibition. RNA

Aug. 11-21. SKIB-71 exhibition. NAFA (RNA)

Aug. 29. 13º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

Jul. 20. Ragini Upadayay Grela exhibition. British Council

J ART GALLERY
Feb. 21-27. 1989. Krishna Gopal Ranjit and Ashmina Ranjit exhibition
Mar. 8-12. 1989. Manohar Man Poon exhibition.
Sept. 30-11. 1989. Hare Ram Jojiju "Joju" exhibition.
Nov. 22-24. 1989. Yogendra Dangol exhibition.
Jan. 5-8. 1990. Indra Pradhan exhibition.
Feb. 2-11. 1990. Shyam Lal Shrestha exhibition.

SRIJANA ART GALLERY
Apr. 2. 1988 Nepalese Paintings and Sculptures. Collection of A.Quarterlo and E. Hasler.
Oct. 21. 1988. Denise Herbert acrylics exhibition
May. 23-4. 1989 Nepal Creative Art Trust exhibition.
Jun. 7. 1989. Mari Elin Chamney exhibition.
Jan. 5-15. 1990. Nepalese contemporary artists exhibition.

1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990

Dic. 29. 22º National Art Exhibition. NAFA (RNA). 1º Price Jagadish Chitrakar

Dic. 31. Ragini Upadayay Grela exhibition. NAFA (RNA)

Nov. 3. SAARC Photo exhibition, NAFA (RNA)

Dic. 4-11. Chinese paintings exhibition NAFA (RNA)

Dic. 19. Amateur Women´s Art Competition. Best Show Award: Ashmina Ranjit

SIDDHARTHA ART GALLERY
Sept. 28. 1987. I September Art Collection exhibition.
Nov. 7. 1987. Mahboob Ali exhibition, Pakistan.
May. 18. 1988. Suhir Devkota exhibition.
Sept. 27. 1988. II September Art Collection exhibition.
Oct. 13. 1988. Darpana exhibition, Hamburg
Oct. 27. 1988. Dharmpal exhibition, India
Dic. 7-21. 1988. Kiran Manandhar exhibition.
Feb. 8-16. 1989. Yuvak Tuladhar "Creative Carpets" exhibition.
Jun. 23-7.1989. Paramesh Adhikari "Peace and Passion" exhibition.
Jun. 29-13. 1989. Karna M. Singh Rana exhibition.
Jul. 28. 1989. Shyam Lal Shrestha exhibition.
Sept. 19. 1989. III September Art Collection exhibition.
Dic. 1. 1989. Students of University of Nagoya, exhibition Japan Dic. 11-20. 1989. Hari Khadka exhibition.
Feb. 2-11.1990. Hare Ram Joju exhibition

Jun. 19 – Feb. 12. Shashikala Tiwari, Mahomar Man Poon and Jagadish Chitrakar, *Malerei aus Nepal* exhibition. IfA Gallerie, Bonn, Germany.

Aug. 19. 14º Gai Jatra exhibition. RNA

Dic. 4. SKIB-71 exhibition. NAFA

Mar. 8-11. Mid-Western region´s art exhibition. NAFA (RNA)

PALPASA ART GALLERY
Feb. 8-15. Kul Man Singh Bhandari exhibition.
Dic. 3-15. Aoyama Hishashi, exhibition Japan.

USIS
Jul. 18-28. 1989. Contemporary Nepalese Artists exhibition.
Feb. 9. 1990. Contemporary Nepalese Women Artists exhibition.

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